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Bifurcation: 10yrs later issues persist between AP, T'gana

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Indian pharma giants recall products in US

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SPORTS

Satwik-Chirag win Thailand Open title

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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BENGALURU'S FORECAST

Yesterday
Min temp: 23°C
Max temp: 29°C

Today
Min temp: 23°C
Max temp: 29°C

Amethi, Rae Bareli among high-profile contests today

MUMBAI/LUCKNOW, 19 MAY

Polling to be held today in 49 constituencies in six states and two UTs in fifth phase of Lok Sabha elections that will decide the electoral fate of several prominent leaders like former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, Union ministers Rajnath Singh and Smriti Irani and former J&K chief minister Omar Abdullah.

Over 8.95 crore people, including 4.26 crore females and 5,409 third-gender electors, are eligible to vote in this round. Among the seats going to polls, 13 are in Maharashtra, 14 in Uttar Pradesh, seven in West Bengal, five in Bihar, three in Jharkhand, five in Odisha, one in J&K and the lone seat in Ladakh.

Rahul, who has contested from Wayanad in Kerala, is also in the fight for Rae Bareli, a Nehru-Gandhi family pocket borough represented by his mother Sonia Gandhi since 2004. In Amethi, Irani is seeking a second term.

PHOTO: PTI

In Maharashtra, where polling will be held in 13 Lok Sabha constituencies, including six in Mumbai, Piyush Goyal, Bharati Pawar, and Kapil Patil are among the key nominees of BJP.

Abdullah, ex-MLA Sheikh Abdul Rashid alias 'Engineer Rashid', and PDP's former Rajya Sabha member Fayaz Ahmad Mir are among the 21 others contesting. More than 17.37 lakh voters eligible to exercise their franchise in the constituency. This is the first major political battle post the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019. In Ladakh, Congress candidate Tsering Namgyal, BJP's Tashi Gyalson, and Independent candidate Haji Hanifa Jan are locked in a keen contest. Over 60,000 personnel of central forces has been stepped up in West Bengal's seven constituencies which have a history of election-related violence. Voting will also be held in 35 Assembly constituencies in Odisha. Voting will take place in Saran, Muzaffarpur, Hajipur, Sitamarhi and Madhubani Lok Sabha seats of Bihar, which are all with the NDA. Voting in three Jharkhand Lok Sabha constituencies — Chatra, Koderma and Hazaribag — and by-election in Gandey Assembly seat, where Kalpana Soren, the wife of jailed former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren, is contesting, will take place today. —PTI

>>>More on Page 3

'Op Jhadoo' is on: Kejri's march stopped

He said he would protest outside BJP office

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday claimed BJP has launched a campaign to crush AAP as the saffron party sees it as a challenge.

He also urged party workers and leaders to be braced for even bigger challenges. AAP's march towards BJP headquarters in the national capital was stopped midway as party leaders and workers raised slogans against the saffron party and hailed Kejriwal.

Kejriwal had on Saturday said that he and other AAP leaders would march to BJP headquarters "so that the Prime Minister can send anyone he wishes to jail".

BJP is saying it will send AAP MP Raghav Chadha and Delhi ministers Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj to jail, he had claimed, hours after his aide Bibhav Kumar was arrested in connection with the "assault" on party MP Swati Maliwal.

AAP later said in a statement, "We waited for half an hour on the road for the police to come and arrest us. But BJP accepted its defeat." Addressing party workers and leaders ahead of the march, Kejriwal said there will be bigger challenges ahead and asked the cadre to be prepared.

A 'jhadoo' or broom is AAP's election symbol. "How did I come to know about this? There are many people who go to meet the Prime Minister, many of them know us too. So, after meeting him (Modi), they tell us, and almost everyone has the same version, that the first thing Modi talks about is that these AAP is growing very fast," Kejriwal claimed.

Delhi CM and AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal and party MP Sanjay Singh during a protest march, in New Delhi, Sunday PHOTO: PTI

"Big leaders of AAP will be arrested, they are being arrested," Kejriwal claimed. Kejriwal claimed the entire country is seething in anger against BJP and awill end its "dictatorial" rule on 4 June, the counting day of the Lok Sabha polls.

He also claimed that AAP's bank accounts would be frozen in the coming days. The Enforcement Directorate's (ED) lawyer has already given a statement in the court that AAP's bank accounts will be frozen immediately after the elections, he charged.

AAP also said that the Delhi Police has seized the DVR of CCTV cameras installed inside Kejriwal's residence in connection with its probe into the "assault" on Swati Maliwal and accused the investigators of planting stories to tarnish the party's image ahead of the elections.

There was no immediate reaction from the Delhi Police.

Maliwal, an AAP Rajya Sabha member, has alleged that Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar assaulted her on 13 May. —PTI

>>>More on Page 4

JIBE AT CONG-RULED STATES

Rahul speaking language of Maoists: Modi

JAMSHEDPUR, 19 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday lashed out at Congress and its leader Rahul Gandhi, asserting that any industrialist will think 50 times before investing in states ruled by the party, owing to the "shehzada's use of Maoist language".

Modi, addressing a rally, accused Congress of patronising dynastic politics and considering Lok Sabha seats as "ancestral properties".

"The language used by the Congress 'shehzada' will make any industrialist think 50 times before investing in states ruled by the party... The 'shehzada' is using language spoken by Maoists and is extorting money through innovative methods," the Prime Minister said, in an apparent reference to Gandhi.

Modi's allegations came in the backdrop of Congress leader's recent comments, referring to a speech by Modi in which he had stated that the party received money from top industrialists.

Modi asserted that he has broken the backbone of the Naxals, but Congress and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) have taken the responsibility of "extorting funds".

"I dare the Chief Minister's of Congress and INDIA-ruled states to answer as to whether they agree with the anti-industry and anti-industrialist language of their 'shehzada'," he said. —PTI

>>>More on Page 4

RaGa, Akhilesh leave rally amid ruckus

PRAYAGRAJ, 19 MAY

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party President (SP) Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday abandoned a joint poll meeting in Phulpur area here without delivering speech as their supporters broke through barricades trying to reach the dais. In a video clip shared on the official social media handle of both SP and Congress, people on stage can be heard asking supporters to move back. —PTI

The annual rainfall phenomenon is expected to reach Kerala by 31 May PHOTO: PTI

SE MONSOON REACHES NICOBAR ISLANDS

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Southwest monsoon, the lifeline of India's farm-based economy, on Sunday made its onset over the Nicobar Islands, the southernmost region of the country, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said here.

"Southwest monsoon has advanced into some parts of the Maldives, and the Comorin area and some parts of the South Bay of Bengal, Nicobar Islands and South Andaman Sea on Sunday," the weather office said. The annual rainfall phenomenon is expected to reach Kerala by 31 May.

Last month, the IMD had forecast above-normal rain in the monsoon season in India with favourable La Nina conditions, cooling of equatorial Pacific Ocean, expected to set in by August-September. La Nina conditions help in a good monsoon season over India.

Large parts of the country are battling a brutal heatwave with maximum temperatures touching 48 degrees Celsius, shattering records in several states and severely impacting health and livelihoods. Southern India experienced heatwave spells in April.

The crippling heat is straining power grids and drying up water bodies triggering drought-like conditions in parts of the country. A prediction of above-normal monsoonal rainfall, therefore, comes as a huge relief to the fast-developing South Asian nation. —PTI

Man shot dead in Imphal West in Manipur

IMPHAL, 19 MAY

One man was killed and two others were injured after unidentified assailants shot them at Naoremthong area in Manipur's Imphal West district, police said. The incident took place around 8pm on Saturday outside their rented accommodation, a police officer said. The deceased has been identified as Shree Ram Hangsada, 41, from Jharkhand. The injured are undergoing treatment at RIMS Hospital in Imphal. Police have registered a case and started an investigation to ascertain the reason behind the shooting and the identity of the assailants. —PTI

'Cow trafficking': J'khand man stripped, dragged

GARHWA, 19 MAY

A 60-year-old man was allegedly stripped and dragged after being tied to a motorcycle by three people on suspicion of cow smuggling in Jharkhand's Garhwa district, police said on Sunday. The incident occurred near Amrora village, around 275km from Jharkhand's capital Ranchi.The deceased Surswati Ram was on his way to Banshidhar Nagar Untari with his cattle on Friday afternoon. Banshidhar Nagar Untari sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) Satyendra Narayan Singh said that a First Information Report (FIR) has been lodged in this regard. They also stripped the old man and tied him to their motorcycle. "They dragged me to some distance and escaped after leaving me on the road," Ram stated in the FIR. The old man was brought to Banshidhar Nagar Untari sub-divisional hospital for treatment. Singh said Kashinath Bhuiyan was arrested, while search operation is on to nab the rest of the accused. —PTI

J&K: BJP man killed, NC workers hurt

MENDHAR/JAMMU, 19 MAY

Three National Conference (NC) workers were injured when unidentified people attacked them with knives at an election rally in Mendhar in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district on Sunday, officials said.

NC President Farooq Abdullah was present at the rally organised by the party in support of its Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat candidate Mian Altaf in Mendhar. BJP held a protest against the murder of party worker and former sarpanch Aijaz Ahmad Sheikh in Shopian and accused the Jammu and Kashmir civil administration of ignoring its requests for security to some key functionaries facing terror threats.

Sheikh was killed and a tourist couple from Rajasthan were injured in twin terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir's Shopian and Anantnag districts late on Saturday. Taking advantage of the melee, the attackers managed to escape. Sohail Ahmad and Yaseer Ahmad, both residents of Harni, and Mohd Imran of Kasblari village, received stab injuries and were taken to a local hospital.

PHOTO: PTI

They said the condition of Sohail and Yaseer was stated to be serious and they were referred to Government Medical College (GMC) Hospital, Rajouri for specialised treatment, they added.

Senior NC leader Javed Ahmad Rana termed the incident a "security lapse" and demanded immediate arrest of the culprits. He said it is very strange that people carrying knives managed to enter the rally venue.

"It is a serious incident and should be probed," said Rana.

Some days ago, one of the injured youth's brothers was attacked by the same group and an FIR was registered against the accused, said the NC leader, who rushed to the hospital to inquire about the condition of the injured. —PTI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi takes a selfie at a rally in Prayagraj; Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a rally in Jamshedpur on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

CISF to take charge of Parliament security

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

More than 3,300 Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel will take over the complete counterterrorism and anti-sabotage security duties at the Parliament complex from Monday following the withdrawal of over 1,400 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) staff from the country's most important symbol of democracy, official sources said. The parliament duty group (PDG) of the CRPF wound up its entire administrative and operational paraphernalia -- vehicles, weapons and commandos -- from of the complex on Friday and its commander, a deputy inspector general (DIG)-rank officer, handed over all the security points in the complex to the incoming CISF group, the sources said. —PTI

MANGALURU'S PRIDE

Naturals Ice Cream founder no more

BENGALURU, 19 MAY

Raghunandan Srinivas Kamath, the founder of Naturals Ice Cream, passed away at the age of 75 on Friday night. His company announced the news in an online post, expressing their deep sorrow over his demise and his last rites were performed on Saturday evening at Amboli, Andheri West. Kamath was known for his dedication to creating high-quality, handcrafted ice cream using real fruit pulp.

Kamath's journey began in Mangaluru, where he helped his father sell mangoes. This early experience taught him the art of selecting, sorting, and preserving ripe fruits. At the age of 14, he left his studies and joined his brother's eatery, nurturing a dream of making unique ice cream.

Raghunandan Srinivas Kamath

PHOTO: NATURALICECREAM.IN

Kamath moved to Mumbai and opened his first ice cream parlor in the Juhu suburb with a team of six staff members and started naturals with 12 flavours. The initial success led to the opening of five more outlets by 1994. Today, Naturals Ice Cream boasts over 165 outlets across 15 cities in India. A clever marketing strategy started by Kamath of selling ice cream as a side dish with pav bhaji quickly garnered popularity and large crowds. Inspired by his mother's techniques, Kamath also innovated machines to ensure consistent quality and streamline production, as noted on the company's website. His legacy in the ice cream industry continues to be celebrated for its unique flavors and commitment to quality. —PTI

Copter carrying Iran's Prez suffers 'hard landing'

DUBAI, 19 MAY

A helicopter carrying Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi suffered a "hard landing" on Sunday, Iranian state media reported, without immediately elaborating.

Raisi was travelling in Iran's East Azerbaijan province. State TV said the incident happened near Jolfa, a city on the border with with the nation of Azerbaijan, some 600 kms northwest of the Iranian capital, Tehran. Travelling with Raisi were Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, the governor of Iran's East Azerbaijan province and other officials, the state-run IRNA news agency reported. Rescuers were attempting to reach the site, state TV said, but had been hampered by poor weather conditions. —PTI

Ebrahim Raisi PHOTO: REUTERS

Sister of Hubballi murder case victim attempts suicide

HUBBALLI, 19 MAY

Distressed over Anjali Ambigera's brutal murder four days ago, her sister Yashoda Ambigera attempted suicide, their grandmother Gangamma Ambigera has said. Speaking to reporters, Gangamma said Yashoda consumed phenyl as she was missing Anjali. Anjali was stabbed to death by her neighbour Girish Sawant on 15 May as she did not entertain his proposal for marriage. Gangamma said Yashoda was also depressed because she felt her sister would not get justice, as the accused Girish Sawant was arrested and is "living comfortably" in police custody.
—Salar News

Purple Line services delayed due to track work

BENGALURU, 19 MAY

Bengaluru commuters faced disruptions on the Namma Metro purple line on Sunday morning due to unexpected track maintenance work near MG Road. Train services between Nadaprabhu Kempe-Gowda Station (Majestic) and Indiranagar were unavailable until 7.30 am. The Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) informed the commuters regarding this delay on X. Many commuters took to Twitter X to voice their opinion over this delay. "There was a delay of 5 mins while the train was entering MG Road," said Madusudan. Another user, Mirchi Corner stated "It is routine for Bengaluru Metro trains. No proper service." GB Nagraj, another commuter said, "Some serious attention must be given to this stretch. Frequent disruptions must be avoided." The services were resumed on the entire Purple line by 7.50 am.
—Salar News

Police arrest trio for theft of borewell cables

TUMAKURU, 19 MAY

Koratagere police arrested three people for allegedly stealing borewell cables in Kamakshipalaya on Sunday. The trio had been targeting borewells in Koratagere taluk of Tumakuru district for the past month, leading to police complaints by the villagers. During interrogation, the accused said that they used to get Rs 20,000 every month. The mastermind behind the operation Guru Venkatesh, had hired Raghavendra from Bengaluru to carry out the thefts on a monthly salary. The stolen cables were then sold to a man named Vinesh. CCTV footage helped in nabbing the accused who were caught in the act while stealing a borewell cable near Waddagere in the Koratagere area. Acting on the surveillance footage and tracking the movements of the car used in the crime, Koratagere police, led by Inspector Anil, apprehended the three suspects.
—Salar News

Goa police arrest B'luru man for cyberbullying

BENGALURU, 19 MAY

Goa cybercrime police have arrested a man from Bengaluru on charges of cyber bullying a woman and extortion after posting a fake job advertisement online, an official said on Sunday. Following a complaint by the Goa-based woman, the cybercrime team arrested the accused, Mohan Raj V, 29, on Saturday after laying a trap, a police spokesperson said. The victim in her complaint claimed the accused published a fake job advertisement for a vacancy at a foreign bank and contacted her through a chatting app, he said. The accused then began to blackmail the woman, demanding sexual favours to delete the compromising material, he said. The woman alleged that the accused harassed her for the past two months and demanded she meet him in Bengaluru or else he would make her videos and pictures public. The investigation suggested the accused created fake accounts using VPN phone numbers and posted fraudulent job offers targeting female victims.
—PTI

₹50 fine not enough to curb animal abuse: Activists

City saw 145 cases of animal abuse in first 3 months of 2024

MEGHANA PRASAD
BENGALURU, 19 MAY

117 cases were registered from August to December in 2023 *PHOTO: PTI*

The increase in the number of animal cruelty cases in Bengaluru is concerning. According to police records, 145 cases of animal abuse have been registered in just the first three months of 2024 when compared to 117 from August to December of 2023.

Speaking to **Salar News** a lawyer for Compassion Unlimited Plus Action (CUPA), Alwyn Sebastian, highlights the limitations of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (PCA) 1960. "The legal framework for protecting animals is very much inadequate. The meagre penalty of Rs 10 to Rs 50 is not enough for the accused to mend his ways. The perpetrator can pay that fine and go back to doing the same thing again." Sebastian stated.

In a recent case, six puppies were found brutally killed on 7 May at an under-construction site of a gated community in Kanakapura road. The accused had smashed the puppies' heads leading to their instant death. In another incident, unidentified miscreants poisoned and killed 18 dogs near RR Nagar on 14 August 2023.

In light of the recent events, Animal rights groups have proposed a dedicated Ministry for animal welfare, revised National Crime Records Bureau data collection to include animal-related crimes, and a new law to replace the outdated PCA. "We have collaborated with other NGOs and animal welfare organisations to file a petition for a more vigorous punishment for the perpetrators like a fine of Rs 75,000, a jail time of two years or both," said Sebastian.

- In a recent case, six puppies were found brutally killed on 7 May at an under-construction site of a gated community in Kanakapura road. The accused had smashed the puppies' heads leading to their instant death

Other than the 145 cases, many cases go without being reported and are not given an FIR for further investigation. When people report animal abuse cases to the police, many officers are reluctant to file an FIR, hence downgrading the seriousness of the case said animal activists in the City. These cases include sexual abuse, neglect leading to poor health and well-being, and physical violence resulting in death or serious injury of some animals.

Although animal welfare experts are not citing the exact reason for the spurt, many are saying the intolerance towards animals has been growing among Bengalureans.

Animal Welfare Warden with Karnataka Animal Welfare Board Thejeshwar B told **Salar News**, "We rehabilitate and rehome dogs who are abandoned, rescued from illegal breeding operations. We are currently getting 4-5 cases of animal abuse daily and have rescued and provided shelter to 25 dogs till now. Most of them involve physical abuse or animals kept in bad conditions."
—Salar News

EMERGENCY LANDING

The fire was noticed minutes after the take-off *PHOTO: PTI*

AI Express flight from Bengaluru to Kochi catches fire, none hurt

BENGALURU, 19 MAY

An Air India Express flight from Bengaluru to Kochi made an emergency landing at Bengaluru after a fire was noticed in one of the engines, Bengaluru International Airport Limited said on Sunday.

All the passengers and crew were evacuated and no one was injured, Air India Express said in a statement.

According to sources, the fire was noticed minutes after the take-off.

The crew members alerted Air Traffic Controller and a full scale emergency was declared.

Soon after emergency landing at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) in Bengaluru, the fire was extinguished.

A full-scale emergency was declared, and the fire was promptly extinguished upon landing. All 179 passengers and six crew members have been successfully evacuated from the aircraft, the Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) spokesperson said.

An Air India Express spokesperson said that due to suspected flames from the right engine after take-off, Bengaluru- Kochi flight 'elected' to return and carried out a precautionary landing at Bengaluru. The ground services also reported flames, resulting in an evacuation.

"The crew accomplished an evacuation with no injuries to any guests. We regret the inconvenience this has caused and are working to provide alternative arrangements for our guests to reach their destination as soon as possible," it said.
—PTI

Specially-abled woman spends 3 days with mom's body without food, dead

BENGALURU, 19 MAY

PHOTO: PTI

A young woman with dementia who spent three days without food or water next to the dead body of her mother died in Udupi district on Saturday, despite last-minute efforts to save her.

The family, originally from Hengalli, had lived in Mudugopadi village of Kundapur taluk in Udupi district for the past 15 years, where this incident occurred.

Jayanthi Shetty, 62, who suffered from diabetes and blood pressure issues, passed away three days prior. Her daughter, Pragati Shetty, 34, who also had diabetes and recently underwent a leg amputa-tion, remained alone in the house with her mother's body. Due to Pragati's mental illness, no one was aware of the situation.

Neighbours became suspicious on Thursday night after noticing a foul odor emanating from the house and Jayanthi was not responding to phone calls. They alerted Gopadi Gram Panchayat Presi-dent Suresh Shetty, who contacted the police. Upon breaking into the house, authorities found Jayanthi's deceased body and Pragati lying unconscious beside her.

Jayanthi's body was shifted to the hospital and the final rites were performed on Friday.

Pragati was rushed to the nearby private hospital in Koteshwara. Though she was given fluids, she passed away on Saturday and was cremated on the same day.
—Salar News

CAUTION AHEAD

Bad roads pose danger to motorists on Kumarakrupa and Race Course Road in Bengaluru on Friday *PHOTO: SALAR*

Some 4-5 cars were damaged when a large tree fell on it near Bob's Bar in Indiranagar on Sunday *PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/NAMMA BENGALURU*

IMD issues thunderstorm warning in City for 5 days

BENGALURU, 19 MAY

India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a warning for Bengaluru and several other districts in the State, predicting heavy rainfall accompanied by thunder and lightning for the next five days. This comes in the wake of pre-monsoon showers in the State.

The alert covers 17 districts, including Bengaluru Urban and Rural, Belagavi, Bellary, Chamarajanagar, and Chikkamagaluru, from 19 - 22 May. An orange alert has been issued for these regions, urging residents to exercise caution. The weather department attributes the increased rainfall activity to a combination of factors, including a surface cyclone, trough, and depression.

Heavy rainfall is expected in Kodagu, Chikkamagaluru, Shivamogga, and the coastal districts. Residents in Bengaluru, Bengaluru Rural, Kolar, Chikkaballapur, Mysuru, Hassan, Tumakuru, Chitradurga, Mandya, Ramanagara, Uttara Kannada, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts should be prepared for thunderstorms and lightning. Meanwhile, North Karnataka is likely to experience some rain as well. IMD has forecasted a cloudy sky for the next 48 hours with a high possibility of heavy rain in Bengaluru. The temperature in the City is expected to remain from 22 to 29 degrees Celsius.
—Salar News

C'magaluru on high alert over dengue cases

C'MAGALURU, 19 MAY

Pre-monsoon rains are lashing across Chikkamagalur district, but they have also brought a surge in infectious diseases. Dengue fever and severe cold fever are on the rise, causing hospitals to overflow with patients. Chikkamagaluru unit of health department has declared a high alert in response.

The number of hospital visits due to viral fever has significantly increased in the district. Since January, 116 dengue-positive cases have been detected. Additionally, there has been a significant increase in the number of out-patients admitted to hospitals this month compared to the previous month, raising concerns.

In response to the rising cases, health department has decided to launch an awareness campaign across the district, urging the public to remain vigilant and take necessary safety measures. 150 suspected dengue patients have been admitted to Chikkamagalur district hospital, with 75 confirmed dengue-positive cases. While there have been no reported deaths, the situation has prompted strict precautions by the health authorities. The increase in flu cases is attributed to climatic changes, and the district administration has advised against panic, urging people not to assume all fevers are dengue.
—Salar News

Water level at KRS drops to 80.55 feet

MANDYA, 19 MAY

Krishna Raja Sagara (KRS) reservoir has recorded its lowest water level in the past six years, with only 80.25 feet of water currently stored.

On this same date in 2016, the reservoir held 81.88 feet of water. The decrease in water levels is attributed to the failed monsoon rains of the previous year and continuous water releases to Tamil Nadu as per Supreme Court orders, which further depleted the reservoir.

The current water level stands at 80.25 feet, with an inflow of 1,560 cusecs and a release of 155 cusecs.

Over the past six years, KRS reservoir has generally maintained a good water level even during the summer, but this year it is critically low. The reservoir currently holds 10.867 TMC feet of water, which is barely sufficient for drinking purposes. The eastern monsoon from 2016 to 2022 was favourable, maintaining comfortable water levels. However, this year, despite increased rainfall in Kerala and Kodagu, the inflow to KRS reservoir has not increased significantly due to higher ground absorption, unusual high temperatures and erratic rainfall patterns.

Farmers are currently preparing their lands for sowing, despite the empty lake banks.

IMD predicted till 23 May Cauvery catchment area would receive good rainfall which helps to increase water level in KRS.
—Salar News

POST IPL PLAYOFFS

CSK fans say they were mocked and harassed

BENGALURU, 19 MAY

Video of a CSK supporter being heckled by several RCB fans *PHOTO: SALAR*

The Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) made it to the playoffs in a nail-biting match against Chennai Super Kings(CSK) on Saturday. However, the celebrations went overboard with several CSK fans reporting incidents of road rage and harassment by RCB supporters after the match. Outside the Chinnaswamy Stadium

CSK fans took to X to share their ordeals hence bringing the issue to Bengaluru City police's attention.

CSK fan Annie Steve recounted her harrowing experience, alleging abuse and harassment by drunk RCB fans at the stadium. She said, "I feel unsafe simply for wearing a CSK jersey outside the match venue. Few drunk RCB fans are abusing and bullying me and chasing after me."

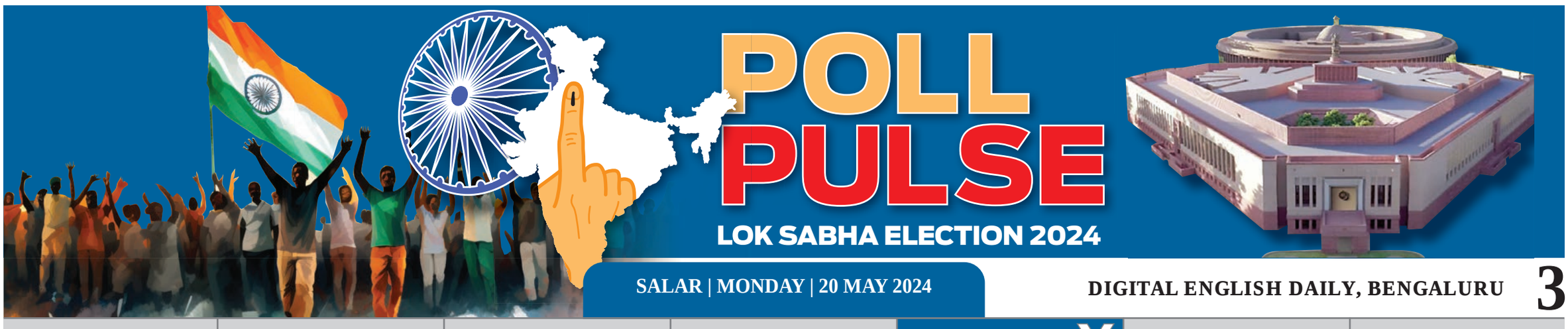
Another woman, @Anjali Thanna described an incident where men aggressively shoved their hands in front of her face and teased her for CSK loss.

When **Salar News** reached out to the Cubbon Park police about the reported incidents, the officer said, "We have got the complaints through social media and we have instructed the officials to check CCTV visuals on the issue. If there is any serious allegations we will look into it."

Another CSK fan, @Mugil wrote on being chased by a group of RCB fans on bikes. He said, " Today While Coming Back Home From Chinnaswamy I Was Travelling Alone (Two Wheeler) A Group Of RCB Fans Saw My Jersey & Chased Me (Around 10 Bikes of RCB Fans) But Lucky I escaped From them By increasing my Speed & Changing the Direction

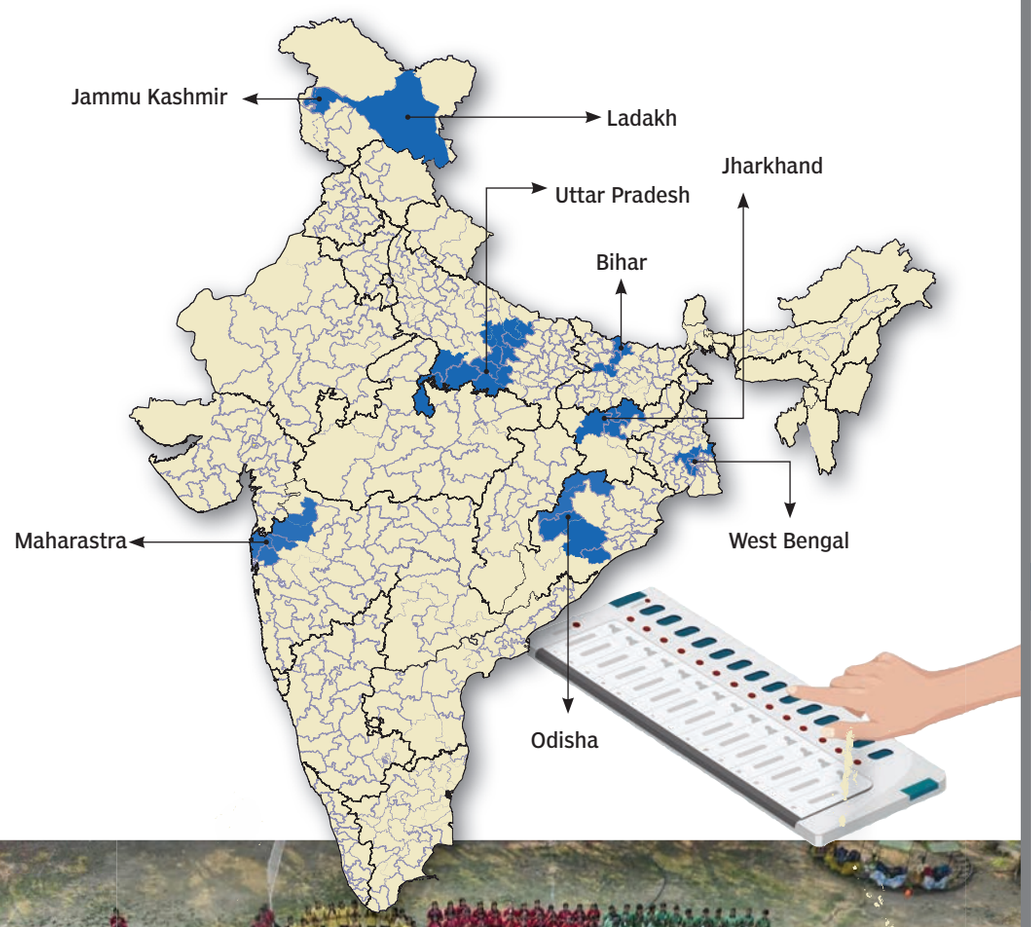
I escaped but what about others ???"

The incidents have raised concerns about fan conduct over the social media war. Many RCB fans also took to X on harassment by CSK fans as they were trying to mock her. @BluntIndiangal posted a video of CSK fans taunting women in front of them. It stated. " Just look at the way CSK fanboys are making RCB girls uncomfortable by taunting them. Faced the same, maybe worse than last year and never cried about it."
—Salar News



49 SEATS GO TO POLLS TODAY

The fate of 695 candidates will be sealed when people across 6 states and 2 UTs vote



UTTAR PRADESH

NO OF CANDIDATES: 144

Total Phases: 7 | Total Seats: 14

Constituencies: Mohanlalganj, Lucknow, Rae Bareli, Amethi, Jalaun, Jhansi, Hamirpur, Banda, Fatehpur, Kaushambi, Barabanki, Faizabad, Kaiserganj and Gonda

KEY PLAYERS

SMRITI IRANI, BJP
Amethi

Union Minister for Minority Affairs Smriti Irani is eyeing a second consecutive term in this erstwhile Gandhi family bastion. After producing a historic victory against Rahul Gandhi in the General Elections in 2019, Irani became one of the prominent faces in Narendra Modi-led Central government. The actress-turned-politician is facing Gandhi family loyalist Kishori Lal Sharma, whose candidature was announced after much delay.

RAHUL GANDHI, CONGRESS
Seat: Rae Bareli

The candidature of Rahul Gandhi was announced after former Congress chief and five-time sitting MP from Rae Bareli, Sonia Gandhi, said she will not be contesting Lok Sabha elections this year. Rae Bareli is the second seat that Rahul is contesting this time as he is also fielded from Wayanad in Kerala, where he is the sitting MP. The Gandhi scion's victory is crucial for Congress to expand its footprint in the northern belts of the country.

JHARKHAND

NO OF CANDIDATES: 54

Total Phases: 4 | Total Seats: 3

Constituencies: Chatra, Kodarma, Hazaribagh

KEY PLAYERS

ANNAPURNA DEVI, BJP
SEAT: Kodarma

BJP has renominated sitting MP Annapurna Devi, who had won the 2019 elections by a margin of 4.6 lakh votes. Devi was in Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) before and became an MLA from Lalu Prasad Yadav's party. Just ahead of 2019 Lok Sabha elections, she left RJD and joined BJP. In the hustings this time, Devi is highlighting the developments and schemes ushered in the constituency by the Centre. Devi will face a tough battle against INDIA bloc's leader Vinod Kumar Singh.

JAI PRAKASH BHAI PATEL, CONGRESS
SEAT: Hazaribagh

Jai Prakash Bhai Patel is an MLA from the Mandu Assembly constituency that falls under the Hazaribagh Lok Sabha segment. A turncoat, Jai Prakash Bhai Patel joined Congress after quitting BJP in March. Earlier he had been an MLA of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM). Just before the election in 2019. Patel is the son of Tek Lal Mahto who was one of the founders and key members of JMM.

MAHARASHTRA

NO OF CANDIDATES: 264

Total Phases: 5 | Total Seats: 13

Name of Constituencies: Dindori, Nashik, Palghar, Bhinwandi, Kalyan, Thane, Mumbai North, Mumbai North West, Mumbai North East, Mumbai North Central, Mumbai South Central, Mumbai South and Dhuler

KEY PLAYERS

PIYUSH GOYAL, BJP
Seat: Mumbai North

A veteran in politics, Union Minister Piyush Goyal has handled several portfolios such as Ministries of Commerce and Industry, Railways, Finance, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Textiles. But Goyal will make his debut from this constituency and he will be up against actor-politician Bhushan Patil. The announcement of his candidature as early as two months before the elections in Mumbai and the seat being a BJP bastion, has made task comparatively easier for Goyal.

VARSHA GAIKWAD, CONGRESS
Mumbai North Central

A four-time MLA from Dharavi and former minister, Varsha Gaikwad is Congress party's Mumbai unit chief. The seat was earlier held by Varsha's father Eknath Gaikwad, who was a three-time MP. Hailing from an Ambedkarite-Buddhist family, she was a lecturer at the Siddharth College of Arts, Science and Commerce. She had been a minister in the erstwhile Democratic Front government and the previous Maha Vikas Aghadi dispensation. Public prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam, responsible for Ajmal Kasab's execution is standing from this seat for the first time and ready to give a tough fight to her.

RICHEST CANDIDATE IN THIS PHASE

ANURAG SHARMA
Party: BJP | **Constituency:** Jhansi
Assets:
₹212 crore

ODISHA

NO OF CANDIDATES: 40

Total Phases: 5 | **Total Seats: 5**

Constituencies: Sundargarh, Bolangir, Kandhamal, Aska and Bargarh

KEY PLAYERS

JUAL ORAM, BJP
Seat: Sundargarh

Former Union tribal affairs minister Jual Oram has won the Sundargarh seat for a record number of five times since 1998. A prominent tribal leader of BJP, Oram is riding on Modi factor and his appeal that this is his "last election". After Droupadi Murmu became the President it has fuelled his positive sentiments among the tribals towards BJP. Oram is one of the two founding Legislative Assembly members from BJP in Odisha. In 2019, Oram defeated BJD's Sunita Biswal by 2.24 lakh votes.

ACHYUTANANDA SAMANTA, BJD
Seat: Kandhamal

Achyutananda Samanta, a sitting MP, is eyeing a second consecutive term from BJD. A leading edu-entrepreneur and social activist, Samanta provides free education to underprivileged and tribal children through his network of educational institutions such as KIIT, KISS, and KIMS Medical College and Hospital. Samanta is facing BJP's Sukanta Panigrahi and Congress' Amir Chand Nayak in a constituency where BJD had won all elections after delimitation in 2008.

BIHAR

NO OF CANDIDATES: 80

Total Phases: 7 | **Total Seats: 5**

Constituencies: Madhubani, Muzaffarpur, Saran, Hajipur and Sitamarhi

KEY PLAYERS

RAJIV PRATAP RUDY, BJP
SEAT: Saran

Having served as a Union Minister in Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Narendra Modi's governments, Rajiv Pratap Rudy is eyeing a hat-trick of victories from Saran this time. Taking on RJD supremo Lalu Prasad Yadav's daughter Rohini Acharya, Rudy is banking on infra and industrial development carried out in the constituency. The BJP candidate belongs to Rajput, a powerful upper caste which has a significant presence in the constituency.

AJAY NISHAD, CONGRESS
SEAT: Muzaffarpur

Ajay Nishad won from Muzaffarpur in 2014 and 2019 General Elections and was expecting BJP to give ticket for a third time. After BJP's denial Ajay joined Congress just 3 weeks before elections. Ajay is the son of Jai Narain Nishad, whom Nitish Kumar had picked instead of George Fernandes as JD(U) candidate in the constituency in 2009. Nishad is all ready to give a tough fight against BJP candidate Rajbhusan Nishad

WEST BENGAL

NO OF CANDIDATES: 88

Total Phases: 7 | Total Seats:7

Constituencies: Bangaon, Barrackpur, Howrah, Ulluberia, Sreerampur, Hooghly and Arambag

KEY PLAYERS

LOCKET CHHATTERJEE, BJP
Seat: Hooghly

Locket Chhatterjee sprang a surprise in 2019 when she wrested the seat from Trinamool, which won in 2009 and 2014. Chatterjee gained prominence for her roles in Bengali cinema and television. She was with TMC before joining BJP in 2015. She is now General Secretary of party's state unit and is up against her former co-star Rachna Banerjee. TMC's Rachna is a hugely popular TV anchor of the 13-year-old show 'Didi No. 1'.

PARTHA BHOWMICK, TMC
Seat: Barrackpore

Naihati MLA and state minister Partha Bhowmick is making a debut in parliamentary politics this time. Bhowmick will have the tough task of balancing two warring factions led by incumbent MP Arjun Singh and Barrackpore MLA Raj Chakraborty. He is Deputy Whip of West Bengal Legislative Assembly and also district president of North 24 Parganas of All India Trinamool Youth Congress.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

NO OF CANDIDATES: 22

Total Phases: 4 | Total Seats: 1

Constituencies: Baramulla

KEY PLAYERS

OMAR ABDULLAH, National Conference
Seat: Baramulla

Omar Abdullah was elected consecutively in 2009 and 2014 Assembly elections from Beerwah, which is now part of Baramulla constituency. The ex-CM of J&K is the VP of J&K National Conference. Abdullah victory's is crucial as it is the first election after Article 370 was revoked in the state. He was the member of the 14th LS from 2004-2009. He approached EC and accused them of "unjust cancellations of scheduled campaigns" in Baramulla seat.

SAJAD LONE, J&K People's Conference
Seat: Baramulla

The chairman of Jammu and Kashmir People's Conference is a former member of Legislative Assembly from Handwara constituency. Hours before BJP-led Centre revoked the special status of the State by reading down the Article 370, Lone like other leaders from J&K was put under house arrest. Lone is widely believed to enjoy the support of BJP in the elections.

LADAKH

NO OF CANDIDATES: 3

Total Phases: 1 | Total Seats:1

Name of Constituencies: Ladakh

KEY PLAYERS

TSERING NAMGYAL, Congress
Seat: Ladakh

Having won Ladakh seat for the highest number of times (six), Congress has picked Tsering Namgyal as its candidate. Namgyal is the leader of opposition in Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, (LAHDC), Leh. He is fighting the election demanding the implementation of the 6th Schedule of the Constitution that guarantees land and job for the locals and full statehood for Ladakh.

TASHI GYALSON, BJP
Seat: Ladakh

Tashi Gyalson is a councillor from Lingshed constituency and in 2020 was elected as chairman and chief executive councillor of the 6th Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Leh. He replaced current BJP MP Jamyang Tsering Namgyal from this seat. Gyalson has been associated with BJP Yuva Morcha since 1997. However, he quit BJP in 2000 and returned to the fold in 2019. Gyalson is a staunch supporter of the move to give Ladakh Union Territory status.

CANDIDATES WITH CRIMINAL CASES

Party	Candidates with criminal cases	Total no. of candidates in Phase 5	%
Samajwadi Party	5	10	50%
Shiva Sena	3	6	50%
AIMIM	2	4	50%
BJP	19	40	48%
Congress	8	18	44%
AITC	3	7	43%
Shiv Sena (UBT)	3	8	38%
RJD	1	4	25%
BJD	1	5	20%

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Bihar teacher tells students don't vote for BJP, jailed

MUZAFFARPUR, 19 MAY

A government school teacher in Bihar has been arrested and sent to jail for allegedly telling children in his class "nobody should vote for Modi", an official said on Sunday. According to Muzaffarpur SSP Rakesh Kumar, teacher has been booked for violating the election model code of conduct. DEO Ajay Kumar Singh said teacher Harendra Rajak's conduct was brought to his notice by family members of a number of students of the government secondary school at Amrakh in Kurhani block. "A written complaint was submitted by the family members that children were being told by the teacher that nobody should vote for Modi since foodgrains unfit for human consumption were being distributed under the free ration scheme", DEO said. *—PTI*

Sandeshkhali: TMC worker detained for 'molesting' girl

KOLKATA, 19 MAY

A TMC worker has been detained for allegedly molesting a minor girl in West Bengal's Sandeshkhali area, police said. According to the complaint lodged by the girl's mother, the accused "somehow" entered their house on Friday night and molested the minor. The riverine Sandeshkhali area — situated on the borders of the Sundarbans, about 100km from Kolkata — had been on the boil in February with protests over allegations of sexual abuse and land grab against now-arrested TMC leader Shajahan Sheikh and his supporters. The girl, a Class-8 student, managed to escape and started shouting for help as family members and neighbours came out. An officer of Basirhat Police said the accused, is being questioned. *—PTI*

Jailed radical Amritpal gets mike as poll symbol

CHANDIGARH, 19 MAY

Jailed radical preacher Amritpal Singh, who is contesting from the Khadoor Sahib seat in Punjab as an Independent candidate, has been allotted the poll symbol of "'mike'. Amritpal, the chief of the 'Waris Punjab De' outfit, is lodged in Assam's Dibrugarh jail under the National Security Act. Sarabjeet Singh Khalsa, who is contesting from Faridkot (reserve) constituency as an Independent, has been allotted the poll symbol of 'Ganna Kisan' (sugarcane farmer). Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Sibin C on Sunday said 328 candidates contesting for the 13 Lok Sabha seats in Punjab have been allotted election symbols. *—PTI*

Jhargram BJP MP joins TMC at Abhishek's rally

KOLKATA, 19 MAY

Jhargram BJP MP Kunar Hembram joined the Trinamool Congress (TMC) in the presence of party national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee at an election meeting on Sunday. Soon after joining TMC in West Bengal's Jhargram, Hembram said he will work for the development of the state under the leadership of TMC chief Mamata Banerjee and Abhishek Banerjee. TMC said, "On the day Narendra Modi is holding sabhas in Bengal, BJP's outgoing MP Kunar Hembram joins TMC in the presence of Abhishek Banerjee." BJP state spokesperson Samik Bhattacharya downplayed the significance of Hembram's decision to quit the party. Hembram had won 2019 Lok Sabha polls from Jhargram on a BJP ticket but was not nominated by party this year. *—PTI*

Assault could have been fatal, Bibhav evasive: Cops

Most vital evidence was the DVR but it is yet to be provided

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Delhi Police in its remand paper submitted late Saturday evening seeking seven days custody of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar regarding the alleged assault on AAP Rajya Sabha member Swati Maliwal said that it was a "serious case" where the "brutal assault" could have turned "fatal". Court allowed five-day custodial interrogation Bibhav Kumar, saying the police remand was a "necessity" in the matter.

Metropolitan Magistrate Gaurav Goyal, who sent Kumar to five-day police custody, was told by the investigating agency that he did not cooperate with the police and had been evasive in his replies.

"This is a very serious case where a Member of Parliament, a public figure, has been brutally assaulted which could have been fatal. Despite specific questions, the accused has not cooperated in the investigation and has been evasive in his replies," said the remand paper signed by North District Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police Anjitha Chepyala.

Delhi Police arrested Kumar earlier on Saturday and his anticipatory bail plea was subsequently observed as becoming "infructuous" by a Delhi court The remand application said that Maliwal's testimony before the magistrate was corroborated by the medical evidence. According to Maliwal's allegations, Kumar screamed, threatened and used abusive language against her, besides being "brutally assaulting", dragging and banging her head on a centre table, the plea said. It said that the "most vital evidence" was the digital video record (DVR) of the spot but it was yet to be provided to the police. *—PTI*

Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar being brought to Tis Hazari Court in the case of alleged assault on Swati Maliwal **PHOTO: PTI**

AAP backs accused: Maliwal

New Delhi, 19 May

AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal, who has been accused by her party of being part of a conspiracy to frame Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a false case, on Sunday said her party colleagues once sought justice for Nirbhaya but today they are supporting a person accused of assaulting her. She said if AAP leader and Manish Sisodia, who is in jail had been here "maybe things wouldn't have been so bad for me!" Maliwal, said there was a time when "we used to come out on streets for Nirbhaya." *—PTI*

'MONKS HELPING BJP'

Modi pans Didi for remarks against religious institutes

PURULIA/BISHNUPUR, 19 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday condemned West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's remarks against the Ramakrishna Mission and Bharat Sevashram Sangha, alleging that she is "under pressure from Muslim fundamentalists" and "threatened" these socio-religious organisations to "appease" TMC's vote bank.

Modi stated that the TMC has crossed the limits of decency by spreading falsehood against ISKCON, Ramakrishna Mission, and Bharat Sevashram Sangha.

Modi emphasised that these organisations have millions of followers worldwide and their sole aim is to serve the people.

Addressing another rally at Bishnupur, Modiaccused Banerjee of being under pressure from Muslim fundamentalists to attack the saints and monks of the country.

Addressing an election rally in Goghat, Banerjee had claimed, "Some monks of Ramakrishna Mission and Bharat Sevashram Sangha are working under the influence of BJP leaders. *—PTI/ANI*

We stay away from politics: Bengal monks

Kolkata, 19 May

Amid a raging controversy over West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee accusing some monks of two prominent monastic orders of working in favour of BJP in the elections, the religious bodies on Sunday claimed that they have always stayed away from politics and never sought votes for candidates of any party. "We do not wish to be implicated in any controversy... thousands of visitors from all walks of life come to our premises to pray and meditate, a senior monk from RMK said. *—PTI*

'WB funds withheld for not using Modi's pics'

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Congress alleged on Sunday that Centre has been withholding National Food Security Act (NFSA) funds for West Bengal for the state not displaying Narendra Modi's face on ration shops and asked the Prime Minister whether he prioritises his public relations over people's daily food.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh posed questions to Modi ahead of his Lok Sabha poll rallies in West Bengal.

"Does PM have any solutions to Kurmi community's demands? Why has West Bengal governor failed to resign despite multiple molestation charges? Is the outgoing PM really withholding Rs 7,000 crore of ration funds so that his face is plastered on ration shops?" Ramesh asked in a post on X.

Elaborating on what he said were "jumla (rhetoric) details", Ramesh alleged that the Modi government has shamelessly used the Kurmis for vote-bank politics, without addressing any of their demands.

"In an attempt to coerce the state government into displaying signboards and flexes featuring the PM's photos, Centre has withheld Rs 7,000 crore of paddy procurement funds. This could seriously hinder the state's paddy procurement throughout this financial year," Ramesh said.

The upper-caste leaders in the ruling BJP have been especially dismissive of Kurmis' demand, Ramesh claimed.

"The community has long demanded ST status but Modi Sarkar continues to drag its heels on the matter, despite the state government submitting the Cultural Research Institute report to Centre in 2017," he said.

Ramesh said Congress "Nyay Patra" (poll manifesto) guarantees a nationwide caste census to ensure that every backward community in India has access to the opportunities they deserve.

Ramesh further said a few weeks after West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose was accused of molesting a Raj Bhavan staff, another woman has alleged that the governor sexually abused her in a Delhi hotel in January last year. *—PTI*

NCP, BJP leaders didn't want Shinde as CM in 2019: Raut

Mumbai, 19 May

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday claimed that NCP and BJP leaders, who are part of the present government in Maharashtra, did not want Eknath Shinde as the chief minister in 2019. Talking to reporters, Raut also claimed that NCP leaders Ajit Pawar had opposed Shinde's name for the CM's post saying they will not work under a junior and inexperienced person like him. Last year, Ajit Pawar and eight other NCP MLAs joined government, leading to a split in NCP. *—PTI*

MANEKA EYES 2ND TERM

BJP leader Maneka Gandhi focuses on local issues and asserts that her victory margin will be bigger this time than 2019 in Sultanpur. She is pitted against SP's Ram Bhual Nishad, while BSP has fielded Udraj Verma. Sultanpur will go to polls in the sixth phase on 25 May **PHOTO: PTI**

Kharge's posters defaced after he snubbed Adhir

KOLKATA, 19 MAY

A day after he snubbed West Bengal Congress Chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury for questioning TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee's loyalty to INDIA bloc, several posters and hoardings of Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge were defaced with ink in front of the party's state headquarters on Sunday.

Unidentified persons also wrote 'agent of Trinamool Congress' on Kharge's posters and hoardings.

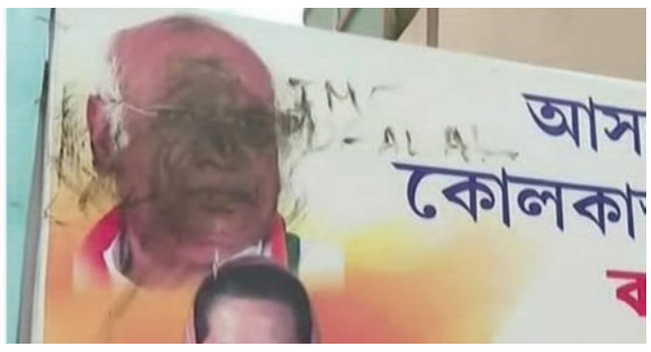
Sources in Congress said that Chowdhury, who is in his hometown Baharampur, expressed displeasure over the incident and asked party workers to lodge a police complaint, which was registered, and the defaced posters were also removed.

"The incident might have happened on Saturday night. This is the handiwork of the TMC which wants to create differences between senior Congress leaders and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury," a party leader alleged.

Chowdhury, while reacting to Kharge's comments, had said, referring to the TMC supremo, "I cannot speak in favour of someone who wants to finish me and our party in Bengal politically. This is a battle for every Congress worker. I have spoken on their behalf. I don't want the state Congress to be used for her (Banerjee's) personal agenda and then finish the organisation."

"If Kharge ji speaks against my views, I will continue to speak for Congressmen at the grassroots in the state," he added.

TMC is contesting the Lok Sabha elections alone in the state, while Congress and the Left are jointly fighting the polls. *—PTI*



Congress chief's posters were defaced by unidentified miscreants in West Bengal **PHOTO : 'X'**

OPPN DIDN'T VISIT AYODHYA TO PLEASE INFILTRATORS: SHAH

KOLKATA, 19 MAY

Launching a scathing on INDIA bloc leaders, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday accused Congress and RJD leaders of not attending the Ram temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya due to their 'Ghushpathiye' (infiltrator) vote bank.

Addressing an election rally at Bettiah in West Champaran district in support of BJP's Sanjay Jaiswal, who is seeking re-election from Paschim Champaran Lok Sabha constituency, Shah said, "Congress and RJD were against the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya from the very beginning. Invitations for the ceremony were sent to them, but they did not come because of their 'Ghushpathiye' vote bank."

Shah accused Congress and RJD leaders of being scared that attending the ceremony would offend their vote bank. The Home Minister asserted, "After completion of the four phases of Lok Sabha elections, I can tell you the result.

Modi ji has already crossed the winning mark of 270 seats. Lalu ji's party RJD will not get even four seats and Rahul Baba's party Congress won't even manage 40. The INDIA bloc will face a humiliating defeat in this election." *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

WHAT'S ON THE LINE?

Contest in Kalyan prestige battle for Shinde's son

MUMBAI, 19 MAY

Shrikant Shinde had comfortably won the Kalyan Lok Sabha seat in Maharashtra in the last two elections, but the stakes are higher this time as his father, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, now heads a truncated faction of Shiv Sena following a bitter split in the party.

The constituency, part of the Thane district and close to Mumbai, contains densely populated urban areas and industrial belts. It will go to polls on 20 May.

Shrikant Shinde entered politics in 2014, contesting as a candidate of the then undivided Shiv Sena and won with a margin of 2, 50,749 votes.

Shrikant Shinde **PHOTO: PTI**

He increased the margin to 3, 44,343 in the 2019 general elections.

But the political scenario has changed drastically since then, as his father rebelled against party Chief Uddhav Thackeray and walked away to join hands with the BJP to become chief minister in June 2022.

Uncertainty surrounded Shrikant Shinde's candidature this time as BJP sensed the possibility of contesting more seats in Maharashtra, and its leader and state minister Ravindra Chavan, MLA from Dombivli, was keen to fight from Kalyan.

Of the six assembly segments in Kalyan, three including Dombivli are with the BJP and one each with the Shinde-led Shiv Sena, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena, and NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar).

As it has three MLAs in the region, BJP pushed its claim for the Kalyan Lok Sabha seat, but Eknath Shinde remained firm that his party will not cede it. *—PTI*

Larger participation answer to betrayal of 2019 promise: Omar

BUDGAM, 19 MAY

National Conference leader Omar Abdullah has said people are identifying themselves with his party's campaign as it is talking about factors important to them: the sense of "betrayal" since 5 August, 2019 and their issues remaining unaddressed in the absence of a popular government since 2018.

Abdullah, who is contesting from the Baramulla Lok Sabha seat, accuses the "BJP and agencies" of riding "multiple horses in this race to see which one can ultimately damage the National Conference".

Overwhelmed by people's enthusiastic response to his

Omar Abdullah **PHOTO: PTI**

roadshows and rallies, especially in areas hitherto dominated by the separatist ideology, the NC vice president said the BJP's tactics in various constituencies indicated a calculated approach to secure advantages through alliances against his party.

"Well obviously, the people have identified themselves with our campaign; they have joined in large numbers and with enthusiastic crowds. But it is also true that there is a general sense of betrayal that what happened on 5 August, 2019 was the betrayal of all the promises and commitments made to the people of Jammu and Kashmir," Abdullah told PTI in an interview.

He said the larger participation of people in his election rallies is an answer to the betrayal of August 2019.

Referring to large turnouts during his election rallies, Abdullah said the absence of an elected government since 2018 is a factor as those who are currently administering them are disconnected from people's daily struggles. *—PTI*

2 killed after 17-yr-old driver hits bikes

PUNE, 19 MAY

Two people were killed when a speeding luxury car driven by a juvenile hit their motorcycle in Maharashtra's Pune city on Sunday, police said. The accident took place at around 3.15am in Kalyani Nagar and a case was registered against the 17-year-old car driver under relevant provisions, they said. A group of friends after a party at a restaurant in Kalyani Nagar was returning home on their motorbikes. When they arrived at the Kalyani Nagar junction, a speeding luxury car hit one of the motorcycles following which its two riders fell from the vehicle and died on the spot, as per the FIR. After knocking down the duo, the car crashed into the roadside pavement railings, it said. *—PTI*

Heroin worth ₹105 cr seized in Assam

GUWAHATI, 19 MAY

Heroin worth Rs 105 crore has been recovered in Assam's Cachar district, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Sunday.The contraband weighing over 10 kg was being transported from a neighbouring state, he said. "Massive drug haul of 105 cr. In a major crackdown on the drugs network, @cacharpolice conducted a special operation and confiscated 10.333kg heroin transported from a neighbouring State," Sarma wrote on X. He reiterated the government's commitment to continue the drive against drug trafficking and ensure that the youths do not fall into such a trap. The chief minister shared a photograph of the seized drugs along with two accused persons on social media.*—PTI*

Pune: Billboard falls, horse injured, vehicles damaged

PUNE, 19 MAY

A horse was injured and a few vehicles were damaged after a hoarding collapsed due to strong winds in Maharashtra's Pune city, police said. The billboard crashed to the ground between 5pm and 6pm on Saturday outside a wedding hall near Kavdi Pat toll booth on the Pune-Solapur Highway, an official said. The incident comes days after a giant illegal billboard in Mumbai's Ghatkopar area collapsed on a petrol pump due to gusty winds and unseasonal rains, killing 16 peopl and injuring 75. Citing preliminary information about the incident in Pune, the police on Saturday said the hoarding collapsed due to strong winds and it fell on a horse, and a few vehicles, including one brought by a band party, outside the Gulmohar Lawns wedding hall. The injured horse was rescued and taken for treatment, the official said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

'Audio books can stimulate a child's interest in reading'

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Audio books can inculcate story listening habits in children and gradually attract them to reading books, says legendary author Ruskin Bond who turned 90 Sunday. To commemorate the day, audiobook platform Audible has brought out a keepsake edition with 25 of his popular stories. Titled "All Time Favourites for Children", the stories have been curated and selected by the author himself. The narration is by Anuj Datta Bond said audiobooks can be like oral storytelling and stimulate a child's interest in reading. "Sometimes a child is reluctant to make the effort to start reading a book. If it's being read to them, either the book is on audio or somebody is reading from one, it helps to create interest. Once that interest develops, the young reader very often will go on to reading books on his or her own," Bond said.*—PTI*

Bifurcation: 10yrs later issues persist between AP, T'gana

Hyderabad would be the capital of T'gana alone from 2 June

HYDERABAD, 19 MAY

It has been ten long years since bifurcation, but several issues such as division of assets, power bill dues, are still unresolved between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana even as Hyderabad would cease to be the common capital of the two states from 2 June.

Hyderabad would belong solely to Telangana, according to Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act 2014.

Though an expert committee headed by retired bureaucrat Sheela Bhide gave recommendations on bifurcation of Schedule IX and X institutions, the matter remained unresolved.

The two states have also been caught in a row over payment of dues for supply of power post bifurcation.

Transfer of employees is one of the issues which is waiting for final resolution.

The Telangana Non-Gazetted Officers' Union Central - Hyderabad president M Jagadeeshwar told PTI on Sunday that they submitted a memorandum to Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka on 18 May urging the government to bring back the leftover (144) Telangana employees allotted to AP during state bifurcation.

These employees have been working in AP since 2014.

Another example is the disagreement between the two states over assets of the state-run Road Transport Corporation.

Hyderabad would belong solely to Telangana, according to Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act 2014 PHOTO: PIXABAY

A senior official of the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) told PTI that AP sought a share in assets of the corporation located in Hyderabad and that the TSRTC has denied and disagreed on it.

The TSRTC feels that these assets belong to it as per the definition of 'headquarters' given by the Sheela Bhide panel.

Chief MA Revanth Reddy had instructed the officials to settle amicably the pending transfer and repatriation of employees to Andhra Pradesh.

He had told the officials to resolve the issues where there is reconciliation between the two states and to act in such a way to protect the interests of Telangana over other pending matters.

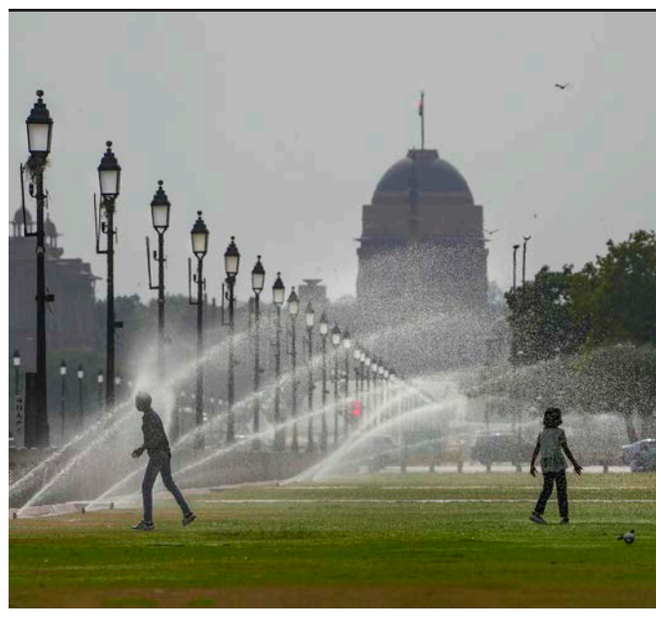
The Telangana government had proposed to conduct a meeting of the state cabinet on 18 May to discuss, among others, the pending issues between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh and other related matters.

As per the AP Reorganisation Act, the bustling metropolis of Hyderabad, would be the capital of Telangana alone from June 2, 2024.

Though Hyderabad is the common capital for the two states till June 2, 2024, the Andhra Pradesh Secretariat and almost the entire state administration shifted to Amaravati in AP in 2016 when TDP president N Chandrababu Naidu was the chief minister.

—PTI

BEATING THE HEAT



A boy stands facing a spray to beat the heat at Central Vista Lawns near India Gate, in New Delhi on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

CPO suspended for aiding accused in dowry case

KOZHIKODE, 19 MAY

A civil police officer of the Kerala police has been suspended for allegedly helping an accused in a sensational domestic violence case leave the country.

Police sources said on Sunday that a senior civil police officer (CPO) of the Pantheerankavu police station in Kozhikode city has been suspended after an internal inquiry revealed allegations that he was in regular contact with Rahul P Gopal, who is accused of brutally assaulting and attempting to kill his newly-wed wife in this district.

Facing a probe into the case, Rahul left the country a few days ago, prompting the police to approach Interpol to issue a Blue Corner notice against him.Earlier, the station house officer of the Pantheerankavu police station was suspended for his alleged lapses in the investigation.

PHOTO: ONMANORAMA

The woman alleged that the police in Pantheerankavu, where her matrimonial home is located, did not register a case of attempted murder despite her complaint clearly stating that her husband tried to strangle her using a mobile phone charging cable.

However, The in-laws of the bride have denied the allegation that they had demanded dowry. *—PTI*

Kerala man says hospital inserted wrong implant

KOZHIKODE, 19 MAY

Allegations of medical negligence continued to haunt the Government Medical College Hospital here, with a man lodging a complaint with the police on Sunday alleging that an implant meant for another patient was wrongly inserted into his broken hand.

Dismissing the allegations as "baseless," the hospital said that the patient was given the standard treatment and surgery typically administered for this type of fracture.

The fresh allegations surfaced just days after a doctor was suspended for allegedly operating on the tongue of a four-year-old girl, instead of surgically removing the child's sixth finger.

An officer of the Medical College police station said a First Information report (FIR) has been lodged over the alleged mix-up that took place at the Medical College Hospital on Saturday.

"The man has raised some suspicions regarding his surgery. A detailed investigation is required to ascertain the claim in the complaint," the officer told PTI.

The alleged error in the treatment was reportedly detected in an X-ray after the surgery.

—PTI

Trade ties off due to heavy duties: Pak min on India

DEHRADUN, 9 MAY

Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has said that trade ties between Islamabad and New Delhi have remained suspended since 2019 due to the imposition of "heavy duties" by India on imports from Pakistan after the Pulwama attack.

In a written reply submitted to the National Assembly on Saturday, Dar, who also holds the deputy prime minister's slot, said: "India decided to impose 200 per cent duty on imports from Pakistan, suspended the Kashmir bus service and trade across the Line of Control after the Pulwama attack."

According to the Dawn newspaper, Dar was responding to a question by Pakistan People's Party lawmaker Sharmila Faruqui seeking details about trade challenges faced by Pakistan in its relations with neighbouring countries, especially India.

In March, during a press conference in London, Dar highlighted the eagerness of Pakistan's business community to resume trade activities with India. However, his office later clarified that Pakistan has no plan to resume trade relations with India which has been "non-existent" since 2019.Pakistan downgraded its ties with India after the Indian Parliament suspended Article 370 on 5 August, 2019, a decision that Islamabad believed undermined the environment for holding talks between the neighbours.

"We have consistently advocated constructive engagement and result-oriented dialogue to resolve all outstanding issues, including the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir with India...," Dar said on Saturday. The foreign minister said that the "onus is now on Delhi to take steps for the creation of an environment that is conducive to peace and dialogue".Islamabad and New Delhi have a long history of strained relations, primarily due to the Kashmir issue as well as the cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan. *—PTI*

GARLANDED WITH SHOES

Dalit couple beaten up in MP; 10 people booked

ASHOK NAGAR, 19 MAY

An elderly Dalit couple has been allegedly beaten up and made to wear garlands of shoes in Madhya Pradesh's Ashok Nagar district, police said on Sunday.

The couple's son had allegedly been involved in an eve-teasing incident, they said.

A case has been registered against 10 people who were at large in connection with the incident of thrashing the couple which took place on Friday in Kilora village under Mungaoli police station limits, an official said. The couple's son had been allegedly involved in eve-teasing the wife of one of the accused following which the Dalit family left the village, Mungaoli police station in-charge Gabbar Singh Gurjar said.

The couple's son had allegedly teased wife of one of the accused PHOTO: X

The couple came to the village recently, he said. On Friday, the accused allegedly tied the 65-year-old man Dalit man and his wife aged 60 to a pole, beat them up and made them wear garlands of shoes, the official said. Following a complaint by the victim woman, the police on Saturday registered a case against 10 persons under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 147 (rioting), 149 (unlawful assembly with common objective), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 294 (obscene act) and 506 (criminal intimidation) as well as provisions of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, he said.

- A case has been registered against 10 people who were at large in connection with the incident of thrashing the couple which took place on Friday in Kilora village under Mungaoli police station limits, an official said

All the accused were absconding and efforts were on to trace them, the police added. *—PTI*

SC NOTICE TO DELHI GOVT ON SUKESH CHANDRASEKHAR'S PLEA TO BE SHIFTED

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

The Supreme Court has sought response from the Delhi government on a plea filed by alleged conman Sukesh Chandrasekhar seeking a direction to authorities to shift him from Mandoli jail to any other prison except those in Punjab and Delhi.

A division bench of Justices Bela Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal issued notice to the AAP government.

"Having regard to the allegations made in the writ petition, let the notice be issued to the respondent, returnable on 19 July, 2024," the bench said.

Senior advocate Paramjeet Singh Patwalia, appearing for Chandrasekhar, submitted that the petitioner has been put under surveillance with two cameras in order to pressure him to withdraw his complaints.

The lawyer told the court that Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena has recommended a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against former minister Satyendra Jain on Chandrasekhar's complaint.

"Please, send me anywhere in the country, except Punjab and Delhi where the Aam Aadmi Party is not there," Patwalia submitted.

The apex court then issued notice in the matter. *—PTI*

Lawyer finds century-old court order in mango theft

THANE, 19 MAY

An advocate has stumbled upon a copy of an order pronounced by a court in Maharashtra's Thane 100 years ago in a case of theft of mangoes, providing a glimpse of the legal proceedings at that time.

In the order dated 5 July, 1924, the then magistrate TA Fernandes convicted four persons of mango theft and released them after admonition, considering they were all young men and he did not want to ruin their life by sentencing them.

Advocate Poonit Mahimkar told PTI on Sunday that while shifting from his previous house in Thane city, he found a bag lying unattended in the mezzanine for years, possibly left by the earlier house occupants.

When he opened the bag, he found some old property papers and a copy of the magistrate's order.

Witnesses testified to seeing the accused selling the stolen mangoes to a local dealer, prompting Andraden to reclaim his property (mangoes) and seek legal action.

"Considering the whole evidence, I am satisfied that accused are guilty of the offence of theft. But they are all young men and I have no wish to ruin their life by sentencing them, and they have moreover no previous conviction. Accordingly I convict them under section 379/109 and release them after due admonition," the magistrate said in the order. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

- In the order dated 5 July, 1924, the then magistrate TA Fernandes convicted four persons of mango theft and released them after admonition, considering they were all young men and he did not want to ruin their life by sentencing them

IN DELHI

Workers bear the brunt of heat

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Sitting under a tree, Suman Mandal strenuously fans her two-year-old son on a hot summer afternoon near a construction site in southeast Delhi's Sewa Nagar.

The mercury has soared to 46 degrees Celsius and Mandal,37, and her two children -- the other aged four -- are visibly sluggish.

"It is very difficult to work in this heat. But I cannot skip work or I will lose income," she said, adding the heat also takes a toll on her children.

Wearing a scarf to shield himself from the searing sun, Sanjay Verma,49, zigzags across south Delhi for eight hours, delivering food.

He says the crippling heat is slowing him down. "I take a break and drink water every 30 minutes, otherwise I will faint or drop dead."The International Institute for Environment and Development's (IIED) analysis of temperatures in the world's 20 biggest capital cities also shows Delhi reached or surpassed 40 degrees Celsius on 1,557 days (around 43 per cent) in the last 10 years. *—PTI*

Delhi reached or surpassed 40 degrees Celsius on 1,557 days (around 43 per cent) in the last 10 years PHOTO: PIXABAY

Rains continue to lash parts of Tamil Nadu

Chennai, 19 May

Rains continued to lash many parts of Tamil Nadu, as the regional weather office on Sunday forecast extremely heavy rain in Tenkasi, Tirunelveli and Theni districts. The Tamil Nadu State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) has asked tourists visiting places like Udhagamanadalam (Ooty), Tenkasi, Hogenakkal (Dharmapuri dt) and others in the western ghats to follow safety instructions and precautions. *—PTI*

RAIN WARNINGS AND TRAVEL BANS IN KERALA

T'PURAM, 19 MAY

As rains lashed many parts of Kerala, authorities on Sunday urged people, particularly those living in hilly and coastal areas, to exercise vigil.

The Meteorological Department has issued red alerts for Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, and Idukki districts for Sunday and Monday, and sounded orange alerts for four other districts, including Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha, and Ernakulam, for these days.

The Met office predicted thunderstorms with moderate rainfall and gusty winds reaching speeds of 40km/h at one or two places in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Idukki, Ernakulam, Kannur and Kasaragod districts of Kerala till 1pm on Sunday. The Idukki District Collector has ordered a ban on night travel through the hilly areas of the district from Sunday until the red and orange alerts are withdrawn. *—PTI*

Gaza plan: Israel war cabinet min may quit

Benny Gantz says maintaining military control in Gaza would increase Israel's security risks

TEL AVIV, 19 MAY

Israeli war cabinet minister Benny Gantz has threatened to resign unless Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sets out a post-war plan for the Gaza Strip.

Gantz set an 8 June deadline for a plan to achieve six "strategic goals", including the end of Hamas rule in Gaza and the establishment of a multinational civilian administration for the territory. "If you put the national over personal, you will find in us partners in the struggle," he said. "But if you choose the path of fanatics and lead the entire nation to the abyss, we will be forced to quit the government."

Netanyahu dismissed the comments as "washed-up words" that would mean "defeat for Israel". The growing rift comes as fighting rages at both ends of the Gaza Strip, with Israeli forces operating in the southern city of Rafah and the northern town of Jabalia, one of Gaza's historic refugee camps and an area the Israeli military previously said it had cleared of Hamas fighters.

Gantz was speaking just days after another war cabinet member, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, urged Netanyahu to state publicly that Israel had no plans to take over civilian and military rule in Gaza. Gallant said he had raised the issue repeatedly for months but had received no response.

He and Gantz say that maintaining military control in Gaza would increase Israel's security risks, while others, including far-right members of Netanyahu's ruling coalition in the government, believe continued control is necessary in order to defeat Hamas.

In a televised address on Saturday, Gantz told Netanyahu that the "people of Israel are watching you". "You must choose between Zionism and cynicism, between unity and factions, between responsibility and lawlessness, between victory and disaster," he said.

Also among the six strategic goals he set out were the return of all Israeli and foreign hostages still held by Hamas in Gaza and the return of displaced Palestinian civilians to northern Gaza by 1 September. He also said Israel should continue to seek the normalisation of relations with Saudi Arabia as part of a "comprehensive process to create an alliance with the free world and the West against Iran and its allies".

Responding to the speech, Netanyahu said that to meet Gantz's demands would lead to "the end of the war and a defeat for Israel, the abandoning of most of the hostages, leaving Hamas intact and the establishment of a Palestinian state". The chief of staff of the country's army, Herzi Halevi, has also privately pressed on Netanyahu the need for a "day after" strategy, according to reports in Israeli media.

—BBC News

- Some far-right members of Netanyahu's ruling coalition in the government, believe continued control is necessary in order to defeat Hamas

Benny Gantz is worried there is no post-war plan ***PHOTO: AP***

Houthi strikes oil tanker in Red Sea

DUBAI, 19 MAY

Yemen's Houthi rebels hit an oil tanker in the Red Sea with a ballistic missile early on Saturday, damaging the Panama-flagged, Greek-owned vessel in their latest assault over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip, officials said. Though the Houthis did not immediately claim the assault, it comes as they claimed to have shot down another US military's MQ-9 Reaper drone over Yemen and have launched other attacks on shipping, disrupting trade on a key maritime route leading to the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean Sea. The attack around 1 am struck the oil tanker Wind, which was bound for China. *—AP*

The airstrike mostly killed women and children in central Gaza ***PHOTO: PTI***

Massive airstrike kills 20 in central Gaza

DEIR AL-BALAH, 19 MAY

An Israeli airstrike killed 20 people in central Gaza, mostly women and children, and fighting raged across the north on Sunday as Israel's leaders aired divisions over who should govern Gaza after the war, now in its eighth month.

US national security adviser Jake Sullivan was expected to meet with top Israeli leaders on Sunday to discuss an ambitious US plan for Saudi Arabia to recognise Israel and help the Palestinian Authority to govern Gaza in exchange for a path to eventual statehood.

Netanyahu, who is opposed to Palestinian statehood, has rejected those proposals, saying Israel will maintain open-ended security control over Gaza and partner with local Palestinians unaffiliated with Hamas or the Western-backed Palestinian Authority.

Gantz' withdrawal would not bring down Netanyahu's coalition government, but it would leave him more reliant on far-right allies who support the "voluntary emigration" of Palestinians from Gaza.

Even as the discussions of postwar planning take on new weight, the war is still raging with no end in sight. In recent weeks, Hamas has regrouped in parts of northern Gaza that were heavily bombed in the early days of the war and where Israeli ground troops had already operated. *—AP*

As killings surge, Haitians struggle to bury loved ones

PORT-AU-PRINCE, 19 MAY

Dressed in black and white, the crowd of angry teenagers squeezed into a narrow street in Haiti's capital. They stopped in front of a cemetery and hoisted a coffin onto their shoulders, tears rolling down some faces. "Viv Ansanm manje li!" they chanted loudly in Haitian Creole as they walked to and fro, the coffin swaying gently with their 16-year-old friend inside. Their chant accused a gang coalition called Live Together of killing Jhon-Roselet Joseph. He was struck by a stray bullet in Solino, which gunmen have repeatedly attacked. Finding closure for loved ones killed by gangs on a relentless rampage through Haiti's capital and beyond is growing harder day by day in a country where burial rituals are sacred and the dead venerated. *—AP*

Gunfire rings out in Congo's capital

KINSHASA, 19 MAY

Gunfire rang out in Congo's capital early Sunday morning as armed men in military uniform clashed with a top politician's guards in a neighbourhood near the presidential palace, resulting in the death of three people, according to the politician's spokesman and local media. The armed men attacked the Kinshasa residence of Vital Kamerhe, a federal legislator and former vice prime minister of economy, but were repelled by his guards, Michel Moto Muhima, his spokesperson said on the X social media platform. Local media identified the men as Congolese soldiers. It was not clear if they were trying to arrest the politician, who is a candidate for speaker of the National Assembly of Congo in an election that had been scheduled to be held on Saturday but was delayed due to a dispute within the ruling party. *—AP*

PHOTO: PTI

Musk arrives in Bali to launch Starlink satellite internet

DENPASAR, 19 MAY

Elon Musk arrived in Indonesia's resort island of Bali on Sunday to launch Starlink satellite internet service in the world's largest archipelago nation. The billionaire head of Tesla and SpaceX and owner of social platform X arrived by private jet on the idyllic "island of the gods," which is renowned for its tropical beaches, terraced rice paddies, mystical temples and colourful spiritual offerings. Musk is slated to launch the service alongside Indonesian President Joko Widodo in a ceremony later Sunday at a public health clinic in Denpasar, the provincial capital of Bali. Musk will also sign an agreement on enhancing connectivity in the country's health and education sectors, said Indonesia's Coordinating Minister of Maritime and Investment Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, who welcomed Musk at the airport. *—AP*

Tunisians stage anti-migrant protest

JEBENIANA, 19 MAY

Hundreds of Tunisians marched through the streets of Jebeniana on Saturday to protest the presence of sub-Saharan migrants who have found themselves stranded as the country ramps up border patrol efforts. Anti-migrant anger is mounting in impoverished towns like Jebeniana along the Tunisian coastline that have emerged as a launchpad for thousands of people hoping to reach Europe by boat. Chanting slogans to oppose settling migrants in Tunisia, protesters demanded the government act to assist agricultural communities dealing with thousands of migrants living in tarpaulin encampments among their olive groves. *—AP*

Fresh allegations levelled against Imran

ISLAMABAD, 19 MAY

Pakistan's accountability watchdog has levelled fresh corruption allegations against jailed former prime minister Imran Khan, accusing him of "illegally" possessing and selling seven high-value watches and 10 other precious gifts linked to the state gift repository when he was in power, media reports said on Sunday.

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) launched an inquiry against the 71-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi over the alleged misuse of the Toshakhana -- the state gift repository, The Express Tribune newspaper reported. The beleaguered former first couple has been convicted in earlier Toshakhana corruption cases as well.

In January, Khan and Bushra were sentenced to 14 years in jail each by an accountability court for alleged corruption in state gifts they got from the state repository. The sentence was later suspended by the Islamabad High Court (IHC). The previous Toshakhana graft case was filed by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in the charges of hiring the sale of state gifts.

The NAB investigation centres on the illegal possession and sale of seven high-value watches and 10 other precious gifts, including diamond and gold jewellery, the report said.

According to the inquiry, items such as Graff and Rolex watches and diamond jewellery were allegedly sold without being legally owned or deposited in the Toshakhana, as required by law.

The NAB's findings suggest collusion between the buyers of the Graff watches and a private appraiser, who allegedly undervalued the watches by Rs 30 million.

The undervaluation, confirmed via an email from Toshakhana, meant that only Rs 20.1 million, or 20 per cent of the watches' actual value of Rs 100.9 million, was deposited into the government treasury, the report said. *—PTI*

Imran Khan ***PHOTO: PTI***

OHCHR report said the govt must take action to disclose the whereabouts of thousands of people who have been subjected to disappearance ***PHOTO: PTI***

SL seeks UN report on enforced disappearances

OLOMBO, 19 MAY

Sri Lanka has questioned the timing and the mandate of a report issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) this week in which it asked the country's government to ensure accountability for enforced disappearances during the armed conflict with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

The OHCHR report issued on Friday said Sri Lanka's Government must take meaningful action to determine and disclose the fates and whereabouts of tens of thousands of people who have been subjected to enforced disappearance over the decades and hold those responsible to account.

According to the Sri Lankan foreign ministry officials, the ministry would officially write to the OHCHR on its unilateral action to issue a report, particularly its timing.

Sri Lanka was irked by the timing -- a day ahead of plans by the Tamil diaspora and kith and kin in the country of those who died during the final battle of the government's war with the LTTE in May 2009 to commemorate the dead. Events were held to mark the fifteenth anniversary on Saturday in the former conflict zones and even in the capital Colombo despite fears that government troops would crack down on them citing the proscription of the LTTE as a terrorist outfit.

Tamil groups claimed a large number of civilians had perished during the final battle. The LTTE had run a military campaign for a separate Tamil homeland in the northern and eastern provinces of the island nation for nearly 30 years before its collapse in 2009. *—PTI*

- According to the Sri Lankan foreign ministry officials, the ministry would officially write to the OHCHR on its unilateral action to issue a report, particularly its timing

US, SAUDI DISCUSS 'SEMI-FINAL' SECURITY DEAL

DUBAI, 19 MAY

President Joe Biden's national security adviser met early Sunday with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to discuss what the kingdom described as the "semi-final" version of a wide-ranging security agreement between the countries.

The announcement by the state-run Saudi Press Agency comes as the strategic deal had been upended after Hamas' 7 October attack on Israel that killed 1,200 people and saw 250 others taken hostage back to the Gaza Strip.

In the time since, a punishing Israeli airstrike campaign and ground offensive there has killed over 35,000 Palestinians, endangering the security deal that had included Saudi Arabia diplomatically recognising Israel for the first time since its founding in 1948.

Saudi state media released no images of Jake Sullivan and Prince Mohammed meeting in Dhahran, a city in the kingdom's far east that's home to its state-run oil giant, the Saudi Arabian Oil Co. known as Saudi Aramco.

That included "a two-state solution that meets the aspirations and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people" and "the situation in Gaza and the need to stop the war there and facilitate the entry of humanitarian aid", the statement added.

The White House had acknowledged Sullivan's trip and that he would later head on to Israel, where he's scheduled meet Netanyahu on Sunday. However, there was no immediate statement from the US on the discussions, other than to say they would be "including the war in Gaza and ongoing efforts to achieve a lasting peace and security in the region". *—AP*

DRONE ATTACKS

Fighting in Ukraine, Russia rages

KYIV, 19 MAY

Russia reported some 60 drones and several missiles shot down over its territory overnight into Sunday, with Ukraine in turn saying it destroyed over 30 Russian drones. Russia's renewed offensive continues to play out in Ukraine's war-ravaged northeast.

Russian air defences shot down 57 Ukrainian drones over its southern Krasnodar region overnight Saturday, the Russian Defence Ministry said Sunday morning.

Local military officials said drone debris hit an oil refinery in the town of Slavyansk-on-Kuban, but there was no fire or damage. Local news outlet Astra published videos appearing to show an explosion at the refinery as it was hit by a drone. The videos could not be independently verified. Nine long-range ballistic missiles and a drone were destroyed over the Russia-occupied Crimean Peninsula, following Friday morning's massive Ukrainian drone attack that cut off power in the city of Sevastopol. A further three drones were shot down over the Belgorod region, which borders Ukraine. According to regional Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov, a church roof was set on fire by falling drone debris, but there were no casualties. In Ukraine, air force officials said air defence shot down all 37 Russian drones launched against the country overnight.

Ukrainian troops are fighting to halt Russian advances in the Kharkiv region that began late last week. Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday during a visit to China that Moscow's offensive in the Kharkiv region aims to create a buffer zone but that there are no plans to capture the city. *—AP*

Russia shot down 57 Ukrainian drones ***PHOTO: X/@CAPTCORONADO***

China promises 'friendship', 'cooperation' as 2 Chinese warships dock in Cambodia

SIHANOUKVILLE, 19 MAY

Two Chinese warships docked on Sunday at a commercial port in Cambodia, in preparation for joint naval exercises between the two countries.

The Jingangshan amphibious warfare ship and Qijiguang training ship sailed in to the Sihanoukville Port as onlookers waved Cambodian and Chinese flags from the piers. The port is north of the Ream Naval Base, where China has funded a broad expansion project that has been carefully watched by the United States and others over concerns it could become a new outpost for the Chinese navy on the Gulf of Thailand.

The Gulf is adjacent to the South China Sea, which China claims virtually in its entirety, and would give easy access to the Malacca Strait, one of the most important shipping lanes in the world. Wang Wentian, China's ambassador to Cambodia, dismissed concerns about Ream, telling reporters at Sihanoukville that wherever the Chinese navy sails "we bring friendship, we bring cooperation" and nothing else.

"The cooperation between the two armies, between China and Cambodia, is conducive to the security of both countries and the security of the region," he said, standing on the pier. The Jingangshan and the Qijiguang are due to take part in naval exercises from the Ream base from May 24-27, along with two Chinese corvettes that have been docked at Ream's new pier for more than five months. Controversy over Ream Naval Base initially arose in 2019 when Wall Street Journal reported that an early draft of a reputed agreement seen by US officials would allow China 30-year use of the base, where it would be able to post military personnel, store weapons and berth warships. *—AP*

JULIAN ASSANGE

WikiLeaks founder facing pivotal moment

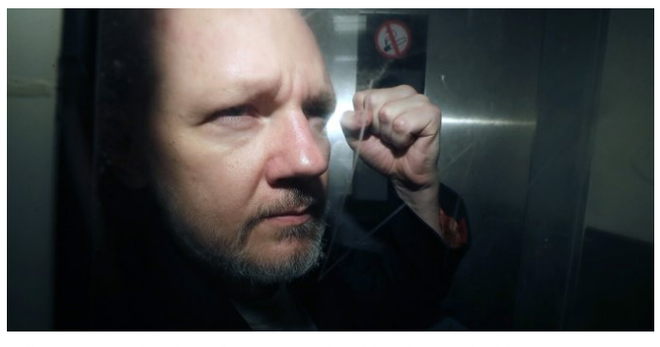
LONDON, 19 MAY

The host of a news conference about WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's extradition fight wryly welcomed journalists last week to the "millionth" press briefing on his court case.

Deborah Bonetti, director of the Foreign Press Association, was only half joking. Assange's legal saga has dragged on for well over a decade but it could come to an end in the UK as soon as Monday.

Assange faces a hearing in London's High Court that could end with him being sent to the US to face espionage charges, or provide him another chance to appeal his extradition.

The outcome will depend on how much weight judges give to reassurances US officials have provided that Assange's rights won't be trampled if he goes on trial.



Julian Assange has been in a 13 year legal battle over leaking secret US documents ***PHOTO: X/@WIKILEAKS***

Latest hearing

Assange's lawyers raised nine grounds for appeal at a hearing in February, including the allegation that his prosecution is political.

The court accepted three of his arguments, issuing a provisional ruling in March that said Assange could take his case to the Court of Appeal unless the US guaranteed he would not face the death penalty if extradited and would have the same free speech protections as a US citizen.

The US provided those reassurances three weeks later, though his supporters are sceptical. Stella Assange said the "so-called assurances" were made up of "weasel words."

Possible outcomes

If Assange prevails, it would set the stage for an appeal process likely to further drag out the case.

If an appeal is rejected, his legal team plans to ask the European Court of Human Rights to intervene. But his supporters fear Assange could possibly be transferred before the court in Strasbourg, France, could halt his removal.

"Julian is just one decision away from being extradited," his wife said.

Assange, who hopes to be in court Monday, has been encouraged by the work others have done in the political fight to free him, his wife said. *—AP*

PHOTO: x@sang1983

ITC's MD Sanjiv Puri takes over as CII Prez

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Sanjiv Puri, Chairman and Managing Director of ITC, has assumed office as the president of the Confederation of Indian Industry for 2024-25, the chamber said on Sunday. He takes over from R Dinesh, Chairman of TVS Supply Chain Solutions. Puri heads ITC Ltd, a conglomerate with businesses in FMCG, hotels, paperboards & packaging, agribusiness, and IT. He is also the Chairman of ITC Infotech India Ltd, its subsidiaries in the UK and US, and Surya Nepal Private Ltd. Rajiv Memani takes over as President-Designate of CII for 2024-25. He is Chairman of the India region of EY (Ernst & Young). Tata Chemicals Limited Managing Director and CEO R Mukundan takes over as the Vice President of CII for 2024-25. *—PTI*

Tata Motors hikes investment outlay to ₹43,000 crore

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Tata Motors group has raised its investment outlay for FY25 to Rs 43,000 crore for new products and technologies, with its British arm Jaguar Land Rover absorbing the maximum share, according to a senior company official. In FY24, Tata Motors group had given a guidance of 3 billion pound investment for Jaguar Land Rover (about Rs 30,000 crore) and Rs 8,000 crore for Tata Motors — a total of about Rs 38,000 crore. "Investment by JLR ended at 3.3 billion pounds (more than Rs 33,000 crore), and Tata Motors did more than Rs 8,200 crore. So, the total we ended was at about Rs 41,200 crore investment in FY24," Tata Motors Group CFO PB Balaji said in an earnings conference. *—PTI*

DCCDL's office rental income rises 7%

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

DLF's joint venture firm DCCDL's rental income from office buildings increased 7 per cent annually to Rs 3,460 crore in the last fiscal, driven by rent appreciation and expansion of the asset portfolio. DLF Cyber City Developers Ltd (DCCDL) is a joint venture between DLF Ltd and Singapore's sovereign wealth fund GIC. DLF holds nearly 67 per cent stake in the JV firm. DCCDL has an operational rental portfolio of 41.9 million square feet, of which 37.9 million square feet area is office space and 4 million square feet retail real estate. According to an investor presentation of DLF, the DCCDL's rental income from office buildings increased to Rs 3,460 crore in 2023-24 from Rs 3,232 crore in the preceding year. *—PTI*

Nayara Energy sees 48% jump in petrol sales, exports drop

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Nayara Energy, a private fuel retailer, posted a 48 per cent jump in petrol sales in the first quarter of the 2024 calendar year, while exports dropped as the firm met rising local demand for fuel. In the January-March quarter, Nayara sold 70 per cent of all petroleum products it produced at its Vadinar oil refinery in Gujarat in the local Indian market, a company statement said. "Nayara Energy is primarily focused on catering to the growing demand of petroleum products in India through institutional business, sales to other oil companies and through its own retail chain," it added. The country is short in production of crude oil (raw material for making fuels like petrol and diesel), but it has surplus refining capacity, which leads to the export of petroleum products like diesel. *—PTI*

Indian pharma giants recall products in US

Dr Reddy's, Sun Pharma, Aurobindo are recalling products due to manufacturing issues

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Drug makers Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Sun Pharma and Aurobindo Pharma are recalling products in the US market due to manufacturing issues, as per the latest Enforcement Report of the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA). Dr Reddy's Laboratories is recalling close to 20,000 cartons of a medication used to control blood phenylalanine levels in adults and children.

Princeton (New Jersey) based Dr Reddy's Laboratories, is recalling Javygtor (sapropterin dihydrochloride) Powder for Oral Solution (100mg) due to it being a "Sub-potent Drug", USFDA stated.

The company is also recalling another lot of sapropterin dihydrochloride for the same reason, it added. The USFDA said the drug maker initiated the Class I recall in the US on 8 April this year.

As per the US health regulator, a Class I recall pertains to defective products that can cause serious health problems.

A Class I recall pertains to defective products that can cause serious health problems PHOTO: FREEPIK

The USFDA said Sun Pharma is recalling 11,016 vials of Amphotericin B Liposome for Injection, used to treat fungal infections, in the US market.

- The USFDA said Sun Pharma is recalling 11,016 vials of Amphotericin B Liposome for Injection, used to treat fungal infections, in the US market

The company's US-based arm initiated the Class II recall on 19 April this year due to "Out of specification for assay", the USFDA stated.

Similarly, "Aurobindo Pharma is recalling 13,605 bottles of Clorazepate Dipotassium Tablets (3.75 mg and 7.5 mg), used to treat anxiety, in the American market. The company's US-based arm is recalling the affected lot due to "Discoloration: Dotted and yellow spots on tablets", USFDA stated. The USFDA stated that another drug firm FDC Ltd is recalling 3,82,104 units of Timolol Maleate Ophthalmic Solution, used to treat glaucoma, in the American market. *—PTI*

FPIs withdraw ₹28,200 crore from Indian equities on poll jitters

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Foreign investors have withdrawn a massive Rs 28,200 crore from Indian equities so far this month, citing uncertainties about the outcome of the general elections and attractive valuations of Chinese markets. This withdrawal surpasses the net pullout of over Rs 8,700 crore in April, attributed to concerns over a tweak in India's tax treaty with Mauritius and a sustained rise in US bond yields.

Before this, FPIs made a net investment of Rs 35,098 crore in March and Rs 1,539 crore in February. Moving forward, there is expected to be a significant change in FPIs' equity flows in response to election results. Political stability could attract significant inflows into the Indian market, according to Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services VK Vijayakumar.

FPIs made a net investment of Rs 35,098 crore in March PHOTO: PTI

Following the Lok Sabha elections, FPI inflows into India could strengthen due to potential easing of interest rates by the US Federal Reserve, positive resolutions in global geopolitical tensions, and India's increasing weight in the MSCI Emerging Markets Index, projected to exceed 20 per cent by mid-2024, as noted by Karthick Jonagadla, Manager and founder of Quantace Research.

Further, FPIs' withdrawal could be attributed to ongoing geopolitical crises in the Middle East, relative valuation discomfort, and the strength of US bond yields, according to Vipul Bhowar, Director of Listed Investments at Waterfield Advisors.

On the other hand, FPIs invested Rs 178 crore in the debt market during the period under review. Bharat Dhawan, Managing Partner of Mazars in India, notes that economic challenges and geopolitical tensions have made investors cautious.

Before this recent outflow, foreign investors put in Rs 13,602 crore in March, Rs 22,419 crore in February, and Rs 19,836 crore in January, driven by the upcoming inclusion of Indian government bonds in the JP Morgan Index. *—PTI*

Mutual Funds invest ₹1.3L cr in equities on strong mkt performance

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Mutual funds (MFs) showed strong confidence in Indian equities this year, injecting around Rs 1.3 lakh crore, driven mainly by significant retail investor interest and the robust performance of the stock market.

Mutual funds, which manage long-term wealth for domestic investors, prioritise the Indian market's underlying growth potential and are less rattled by short-term events like elections, which allows them to keep investing in equities, Tradejini COO Trivesh D said.

Additionally, the growing interest in systematic investment plans (SIPs) on the back of astonishing compounding stories by influencers and industry veterans has perked investors, who otherwise wish to stay away from the markets, to start participating through these mutual funds, he added.

According to the data from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi), MFs invested Rs 26,038 crore in the first fortnight of the ongoing month and Rs 20,155 crore in April. Moreover, the highest MF buying for 2024 was experienced in March, as they put in a net of Rs 44,233 crore.

Also, they invested Rs 14,295 crore in February and Rs 23,010 crore in January.

Sectorally, mutual funds hold maximum exposure to financial services, followed by IT and pharmaceuticals. Additionally, mutual funds have been increasing their allocation to pharmaceutical, power, construction projects and automobiles in the last one year. *—PTI*

Mcap of 8 of top 10 most valued firms climbs ₹1.47L cr

PHOTO: PIXABAY

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Eight of the top-10 most valued firms added Rs 1,47,935.19 crore in market valuation last week, with Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) and Reliance Industries emerging as the biggest gainers. Last week, the BSE benchmark climbed 1,341.47 points or 1.84 per cent.

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) and BSE conducted a special trading session in the equity and equity derivative segments on May 18 to check their preparedness for handling major disruptions or failures at the primary site.

The valuation of LIC zoomed Rs 40,163.73 crore to Rs 6,16,212.90 crore. Reliance Industries added Rs 36,467.26 crore, taking its market valuation to Rs 19,41,110.70 crore. The valuation of Bharti Airtel climbed Rs 26,492.61 crore to Rs 7,64,917.29 crore, and that of HDFC Bank rallied by Rs 21,136.71 crore to Rs 11,14,163.29 crore. The market capitalisation (mcap) of ICICI Bank soared Rs 9,570.68 crore to Rs 7,94,404.51 crore, and that of Infosys went up by Rs 7,815.51 crore to Rs 5,99,376.39 crore. ITC's mcap jumped Rs 4,057.54 crore to Rs 5,44,895.67 crore, while State Bank of India added Rs 2,231.15 crore to Rs 7,32,576.77 crore. The mcap of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) declined by Rs 16,588.94 crore to Rs 13,92,963.69 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever dipped by Rs 6,978.29 crore to Rs 5,46,843.87 crore. *—PTI*

Zinc demand likely to double in next 5-10 years

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

The demand of zinc is expected to double in India in the next five to 10 years on the back of huge investments in infrastructure sector, including steel, International Zinc Association said on Sunday.

The demand for zinc in India depends largely on the growth of the steel market as zinc is mainly used to galvanise steel to protect it from corrosion.

"I see a doubling of the demand (for zinc) in the next five to 10 years. The market for primary and refined zinc in India is currently close to 800 to 1,000 tonnes (per annum) and has a great opportunity to increase with all the developments that we are witnessing in India.

We see huge investments in additional steel capacity and ...steel still needs to be protected by galvanized coatings. We see a lot of plans and investments going on for new galvanizing lines. So I expect a strong role for zinc in India," International Zinc Association Global Director Martin Van Leeuwen told PTI in an interaction.

The current demand for zinc in India is 800 to 1,000 tonnes per annum.

There are very low zinc users in India, he said, adding that per capita consumption of zinc in the country is around 0.5 kg and is far behind the world average.

"If you look at zinc use in India, it is around half a kg per capita. To put that in perspective, the global average is about four kg per capita. And in developed countries like Korea, Europe, US it can go up to six or seven kgs per capita," he explained.

When asked about the outlook for zinc in the current calendar year, he said that with the world switching over to green energy and strong growth in solar photovoltaics (PV), there seems a great opportunity for zinc in 2024. *—PTI*

B&A ventures into retail segment

The company currently has 11 tea estates in upper Assam PHOTO: UNSPLASH

GUWAHATI, 19 MAY

For the first time in its over-100-year history, B&A Ltd has forayed into the retail segment through its 'Gatoonga' brand of black tea, a top company official said.

The brand was launched in Assam on Saturday, with the company looking to tap the market in the home state before entering other parts of the country, B&A Ltd Managing Director Somnath Chatterjee said.

"The company's retail foray has begun with 'Gatoonga' brand by tapping the Assam market and it will gradually expand across India based on a demand-driven growth strategy," he said.

B&A Ltd Deputy Managing Director Dhruba Jyoti Dowerah said the company's parent group had four verticals previously, and the retail branding being the fifth one.

The existing verticals are tea manufacturing and processing, packaging, tea tourism and broking.

B&A Ltd is the listed flagship company of the Rs 300-crore Barooahs & Associates Group and has descended from Barasali Tea Company Ltd, which was founded in 1915.

The company currently has 11 tea estates in upper Assam locations and produced 5.5 million kgs of black tea last year.

Chatterjee said the Group has rolled out a Rs 50-crore capex plan for a pan-India growth strategy, under which it recently acquired Moheema tea estate in Golaghat district. *—PTI*

INDIA AMONG HIGH-GROWING MKTS: RED HAT

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Red Hat sees India as among the world's high-growing markets, and the country's expanding enterprise base and technical innovation capabilities offer exciting prospects for the IBM-owned company, its CEO Matt Hicks has said.

Weighing in on the larger debate of AI and its impact on tech sector jobs and salaries, Hicks told PTI that artificial intelligence, "if done well", will trigger massive value creation and spawn new industries beyond anyone's imagination.

Red Hat - the enterprise open-source solutions company that IBM bought in 2019 for about USD 35 billion, marking its biggest acquisition ever - is working with a "great" foundation base in India and is at an exciting point where the company is amplifying capabilities with technology roles.

Red Hat, he said, is ensuring that its investments across the board serve the growth in the market.

"That said, we already have a really strong presence in engineering both from our sales or go-to-market teams as well as core support and engineering. One area for us as we see tools like AI, they tend to expand the capabilities.

"So, if I look at India, where we have a tremendous support organisation, which sits very close to engineering, amplifying their work and capabilities with tools like this, let us reimagine what those teams can do," he said. *—PTI*

FOR EXPORTERS

Govt recovers ₹852 cr under amnesty scheme

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

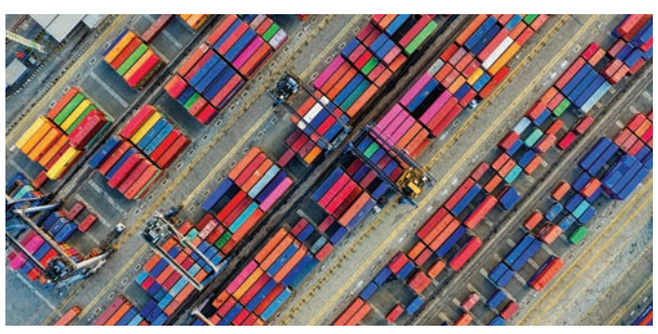
The government has recovered about Rs 852 crore under the amnesty scheme for exporters for one-time settlement of default in export obligation by the holders of advance and EPCG authorisations, an official said.

The figures are likely to increase further as the exercise is on for the compilation of the data, the official added.

The government has fixed 31 March as the last date for payment of customs duty plus interest.

"Under the scheme, 6,705 applications were filed and as per the provisional figures, an amount of about Rs 852 crore has been recovered. This figure is further expected to increase," the official said.

Meanwhile, several small exporters have requested the government to continue the scheme for a one-time settlement of default in export obligation till September.



Government has fixed 31 March as the last date for payment of customs duty plus interest PHOTO: PEXEL.COM

Ludhiana-based Hand Tools Association President SC Ralhan has said several small exporters have not been able to avail of the benefits of the scheme due to fulfilling their obligations to make payments to MSMEs within 45 days.

In the new foreign trade policy (FTP), the scheme was announced for exporters for one-time settlement of default in export obligation by the holders of advance and EPCG (export promotion for capital goods) authorisations.

Under the scheme, all pending cases of the default in meeting export obligation (EO) of certain authorisations can be regularised by the authorisation holder on payment of all customs duties that were exempted in proportion to unfulfilled EO and interest at 100 per cent of such duties exempted.

India's merchandise exports rose by 1 per cent to USD 34.99 billion in April, even as the trade deficit widened to a four-month high of USD 19.1 billion during the month, according to government data.

Imports also increased by 10.25 per cent to USD 54.09 billion in the month under review from USD 49.06 billion in April 2023 due to a significant jump in gold imports.

The country's total exports in goods and services for 2023-24 stood at USD 778.21 billion, the "highest" so far. Merchandise exports in the last fiscal were aggregated at USD 437.1 billion, while services exports stood at USD 341.1 billion. *—PTI*

Reliance Industries seeks access to ATF pipelines, storages of PSU oil firms

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Reliance Industries Ltd has sought access to pipelines and storages that public sector oil companies have built over the years for supplying jet fuel (ATF) from depots and oil refineries to airports, as it looks for a larger pie of fuel trade at some of Asia's busiest airports.

The firm made the suggestion in its comments to oil regulator PNGRB's draft regulation calling for supply of ATF in all existing and future airports through pipelines that can be accessed by any supplier so as to bring in competition and cut fuel cost.

While the fuel market is open, airplanes at the country's busiest airports are fed by pipelines that were built by state-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) over decades.

Reliance, which has been for more than a decade now seeking access to pipelines that supply ATF to airports especially at Mumbai, stated that "the common carrier pipeline scope (which gives third parties access to pipelines built by PSUs) should encompass the associated storage facilities and pumping stations at the 'off-site' oil terminal facilities as they form an integral part of the ATF supply chain."

Out of the 17.12 million tonnes of aviation turbine fuel (ATF) produced by public and private sector refineries, 8.2 million tonnes is consumed within the country and the rest is exported. Reliance's twin refineries at Jamnagar produce close to 5 million tonnes of ATF, a large part of it is exported. *—PTI*

Satwik-Chirag win Thailand Open title

'We lifted this title in 2019 and again we are lifting it here now'

BANGKOK, 19 MAY

In a confidence-boosting performance ahead of the Paris Olympics, star Indian shuttlers Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty on Sunday won the Thailand Open Super 500 badminton tournament with a straight-game win over Chen Bo Yang and Liu Yi of China, here.

Satwik and Chirag, the world number three pair, prevailed 21-15 21-15 over Liu and Chen, ranked 29th, for their ninth BWF world tour title in men's doubles.

It was also the second title of the season for the Asian Games champions following their triumph at the French Open Super 750 in March. They had also finished runners-up at Malaysia Super 1000 and India Super 750.

"It has been a lucky tournament for us. The journey started from here. We lifted this title in 2019 and again we are lifting it here now.

After 2019, we went on to win many tournaments and, hopefully, it will give more boost to us in the upcoming important tournaments," Satwik said after the win.

Asked about the Paris Games, Chirag said: "Not just us but all athletes want to go out there in the Olympics and win that medal and we too want that and hopefully we will play well there."

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty pose for photographs after winning the Thailand Open Super 500 title, beating the Chinese pair of Chen Bo Yang and Liu Yi 21-15, 21-15, in Bangkok on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

For Satwik and Chirag, the title comes at a crucial juncture of their careers as they had some low returns in the last couple of tournaments.

The Indian pair lost in the second round at the All England Championships and then missed the Asia Championships due to an injury to Satwik.

The Thomas Cup campaign was also not too fruitful as they lost a couple of narrow matches to top pairs.

Satwik and Chirag had come into the Thailand Open final without dropping a game and were favorites to claim the title, while Liu and Chen also produced some stunning wins in the run-up to the summit clash and had the reputation of never losing a final.

However, it was always going to be a tough task to tame the top-seeded Indians, who didn't allow the Chinese to get into long rallies or sustain any pressure.

Satwik and Chirag made a superb start by quickly opening up a 5-1 lead. Chen and Liu clawed back with a four-point burst.

At 7-7, the Chinese pair won a 39-shot rally and surged ahead to 10-7 before spraying one long. Liu and Chen played a few intense rallies but Chirag unleashed a bullet return to draw level at 10-10 but Liu ensured they had a slender edge at the break.

Satwik and Chirag moved to 14-11 after the resumption before Satwik sliced one to the net. *—PTI*

IPL 2024

Abhishek's explosive 50 powers SRH to easy win

HYDERABAD, 19 MAY

Abhishek Sharma bossed Punjab Kings bowlers with yet another explosive half-century as Sunrisers Hyderabad cruised to a four-wicket win in the IPL here on Sunday.

Opting to bat on a flat track, Punjab Kings posted an imposing 214/5 riding on Prabhsimran Singh's 45-ball 71 and skipper Jitesh Sharma's final over heroics.But SRH looked in complete control of the tall chase after losing Travis Head off the first ball and chased down the target with five balls to spare.

The win took them second place in the table with 17 points from 14 matches as they would need to wait for the result of the match between Kolkata Knight Riders and Rajasthan Royals.

Rajasthan, who has 16 points, can topple SRH for the prized No. 2 spot with a win over KKR in Guwahati.

Finishing inside top-two gives the teams an extra chance of making the final. Abhishek went about his business with utmost nonchalance for a 21-ball fifty, his third half-century of the season.In his knock of 66 from 28 balls, he smoked six sixes and five boundaries to tilt the equation in their favor completely.

Henrich Klaasen (42; 26 balls) Rahul Tripathi (33; 18b) and Nitish Reddy (37; 25b) made a handy contribution in their complete domination act. Shashank Singh dismissed Abhishek against the run of play with the batter getting beaten by a slower ball and giving Shivam Singh a catch at covers.

Abhishek Sharma **PHOTO: PTI**

Earlier Arshdeep gave SRH an early blow, cleaning up the dangerous Travis Head for a golden duck.

After losing a wicket of the first ball, SRH showed little sign of panic with Rahul Tripathi seizing the momentum in a 18-ball 33.

Playing only his second match of the season, Tripathi took Rishi Dhawan to the cleaners with two fours and one six in a row that set the tone for their tall chase. *—PTI*

Rain delays RR-KKR match

GUWAHATI 19 MAY

Persistent rain on Sunday delayed the toss and start of the last IPL league match between Rajasthan Royals and Kolkata Knight Riders here on Sunday. The rain, which has played spoilsport in the last few IPL games, came back to frustrate the fans and players alike with almost the entire ground under cover here at the Barsapara Cricket Stadium.The Sanju Samson-led Royals have slipped from second on the points table, the Royals would hope to beat KKR and reclaim the No. 2 spot on the table. *—PTI*

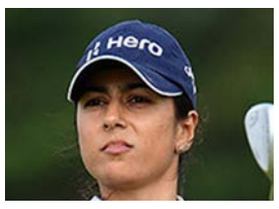


PHOTO: PTI

Tvesa rises to T-21 with a superb 67 in German Masters

BRANDENBURG, 19 MAY

Indian golfer Tvesa Malik carded her best round on the Ladies European Tour in almost four years with a 5-under 67 that carried her from the cut line to T-21 at the end of the third round of the Amundi German Masters at Golf & Country Club Seddiner See.Tvesa, seeking to regain her card on the LET, had an eagle and five birdies against two bogeys. While this was her best show on LET since late 2021, Tvesa had recorded a 65 on the Sunshine Ladies Tour in South Africa, while winning the SuperSport Ladies Challenge in February this year.India's other two players to make the weekend, Pranavi Urs (71) and Diksha Dagar (73) were T-31 and T-43. The remaining four Vani Kapoor, Amandeep, Sneha Singh, and amateur Avani did not cut.Austrian Emma (66) and Alexandra (69) shared the lead on seven-under-par going into the final round. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X / @LIGUE1_ENG

Mbappé left out of PSG squad for final league game

PARIS, 19 MAY

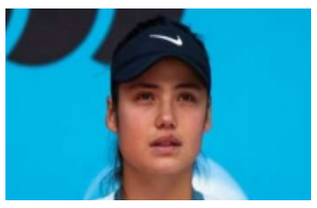
Kylian Mbappé has been left out of the squad traveling to Metz on Sunday for the final league game of the season. PSG has already been crowned champion for a record-extending 12th time. The star striker, who is leaving PSG after seven seasons at the French league club, has not been included in a group of 20 players selected by coach Luis Enrique. Asked to comment, PSG did not give a reason to justify Mbappé's absence. The forward, who is widely expected to join Real Madrid, is not on the list of PSG players who are not available because of an injury. *—AP*

Raducanu likely to miss French Open 2024

ROME, 19 MAY

Former US Open winner Emma Raducanu is likely to miss the French Open at Roland Garros after withdrawing from this week's qualifying tournament.

While the Briton is a third alternate for the main draw, successfully coming through qualifying, which starts on Monday, would have offered her a guaranteed route to the main draw.



Emma Raducanu **PHOTO: PTI**

Her name, however, did not appear among the qualifiers listed on Sunday on the Roland Garros website."It's important for me to keep laying on the foundations. *—AP*

Muddappa breaks Jordanian Fahim's record

BENGALURU, 19 MAY

Star Indian biker Hemanth Muddappa, a 12-time national champion, became the fastest quarter-miler in the country after he broke the record at the 10th edition of the Vroom Drag meet, en route to a grand triple in the Bikes Open event held alongside the Round 1 of the FMSCI Indian National 4w Drag Championship near Hosur on Sunday.

Muddappa of Mantra Racing set a time of 09.264 seconds in the Super Sport 4stroke 1051 to 1650cc class to break the previous record of 9.298 seconds set at the same Taneja track by Jordanian Fahim Zahrani in 2023.

Foreign riders are allowed in the Open events by FMSCI, the Indian federation.

The Bengaluru-based biker put the 2016 Suzuki Hayabusa built by Mantra Racing to good use, touching top speeds of 270kph. *—PTI*

'God's plan': Rinku lavishes praise on RCB match-winner Dayal

BENGALURU, 19 MAY

Yash Dayal couldn't shake the haunting memory of Rinku Singh's five consecutive sixes last year as MS Dhoni lofted his full-toss over the Chinnaswamy roof, before regaining his composure to complete the 20th over and clinch RCB's berth in the 2024 IPL playoffs.

Yash Dayal **PHOTO: X / IPL/BCCI**

Dayal, who cut a forlorn figure after being hammered for five sixes in a row by his Uttar Pradesh mate Rinku last season, redeemed himself on Saturday night by defending 17 in the final over against the likes of Dhoni and Ravindra Jadeja.

"God's plan baby," that was how Rinku summed the reversal of fortunes for Dayal.

The 26-year-old from Prayagraj was released by Gujarat Titans after the 2023 season but he found a new IPL home in RCB, who showed faith in him by paying a handsome Rs 5 crore at the auction.

Dayal not only repaid the faith but also erased the scars of last season.

"When I got to hit the first ball (by Dhoni), subconsciously you reach that place (Rinku's five sixes off him). But I did well this whole season and I kept telling myself that I just had to bowl a good ball.

"I didn't have to look at the scoreboard. I just had to bowl well. *—PTI*

MAX HOLDS OFF LATE NORRIS CHALLENGE TO SEAL VICTORY AT IMOLA

IMOLA, 19 MAY

Max Verstappen held off a challenge from McLaren's Lando Norris to win the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix on Sunday and extend his Formula 1 championship lead.

Red Bull's Verstappen appeared to be cruising to victory having opened up a 7.5s advantage with 20 of the 63 laps remaining, but McLaren's Norris produced a stunning surge to close within a second in a thrilling finale.

Having lost out to Norris in Miami two weeks ago, Verstappen's fifth victory in seven races this season puts his quest for a fourth successive drivers' title back on track. Charles Leclerc took third to seal Ferrari's first podium at Imola since 2006, with Norris' McLaren teammate Piastri beating Carlos Sainz in the Italian team's other car to fourth. Verstappen's world championship lead grows to 48 points, with Leclerc displacing Perez in second. Norris remains fourth, 60 points off the lead, but just six back from Perez in third.Lewis Hamilton was sixth ahead of George Russell, who gave up the position to his Mercedes team-mate as he made a late pit stop for a fresh set of tyres which enabled him to earn the Silver Arrows an extra point with the fastest lap of the race. *—AP*

Max Verstappen **PHOTO: X / @VERSTAPPENCOM**

MANU BHAKER EMERGES MOST SUCCESSFUL SHOOTER IN OLYMPIC

BHOPAL, 19 MAY

Olympian shooter Manu Bhaker emerged as the most successful athlete in the Olympic Selection Trials (OST) Rifle/Pistol, winning the women's 10m air pistol OST T4 match on the concluding day of the exercise in Bhopal on Sunday.

Overall, this was Manu's fourth win in the trials across two events, the other being the women's 25m sports pistol. Manu shot 240.8 in the OST T4 10m air pistol final at the MP State Shooting Academy ranges, leaving Hangzhou Asian Games champion Palak a huge 4.4 points behind in second. *—PTI*

Manu Bhaker **PHOTO: PTI**

India wins silver and bronze on Day 3 of World Para Athletics Championships

KOBE, 19 MAY

The Indian team picked up its first medals in the World Para Athletics Championships with high jumper Nishad Kumar and 200m runner Preethi Pal winning a silver and bronze respectively here on Sunday.

Kumar, a Tokyo Paralympics silver medallist, cleared 1.99m to finish second in the men's T47 high jump final and pick up India's first medal on the third day of competitions.

American Roderick Townsend won the gold with a jump of 2.05m.

Nishad Kumar **PHOTO: PTI**

Another Indian in the fray, Ram Pal finished sixth with his season's best performance of 1.90m.

Kumar had also won a silver in the same event in the 2023 edition of the World Para Athletics Championships in Paris.

The T47 classification is meant for para-track athletes with below elbow or wrist amputation or impairment.

Preethi Pal then added a bronze to India's tally after finishing third in the women's T35 200m final with a time of 30.49 seconds. *—PTI*

Swiatek **PHOTO:TENNIS-X.COM**

CHENNAIYIN FC EXTENDS JITESHWOR SINGH'S CONTRACT

CHENNAI, 19 MAY

Former champions Chennaiyin FC on Sunday announced they have extended midfielder Yumkhaibam Jiteshwor Singh's contract till 2025, following his impressive show in the recently concluded Indian Super League season.

The 22-year-old midfielder from Manipur, who made his ISL debut with Chennaiyin FC in 2022, has been a crucial cog in the club's remarkable show in the recent season of the league.

He not only made 25 successful tackles, the most for Chennaiyin in the season but also registered 14 interceptions, showcasing his quality on the field.

Jiteshwor has played a total of 44 matches for Chennaiyin in all competitions including 23 in the last season. *—PTI*

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Atalanta is back in after a victory over Lecce

ROME, 19 MAY

Atalanta booked a spot for next season's Champions League after three years as they beat Lecce 2-0 away in Serie A.

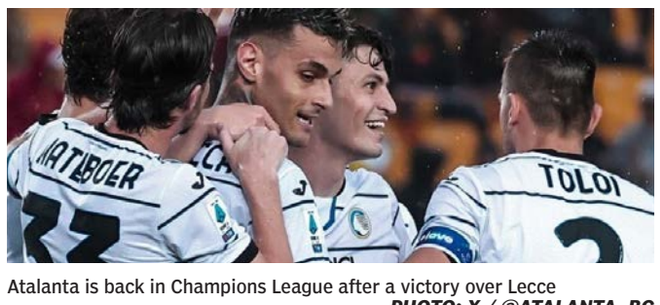
After a goalless tie in the first half, the away side broke the deadlock straight after the break when Charles De Ketelaere ran onto a through ball and lobbed it over an on-rushing goalkeeper.

Minutes later, Aleksei Miranchuk's corner set up Gianluca Scamacca for a twisting header to seal the win, reports Xinhua.

With at least five Italian sides featuring in an expanded Champions League next season, fifth-ranked Atalanta now has a points advantage over six-placed Roma. With two rounds to spare, Atalanta have already secured a top-five finish by a superior head-to-head record against Roma.

Elsewhere, AC Milan who had already secured second place were humiliated by Torino 3-1.

Duvan Zapata and Ivan Ilic's headers put Torino firmly in charge at half-time, while former Milan player Ricardo Rodriguez's rocket extended the lead just one minute into the second half, making Ismael Bennacer's penalty become a consolation. *—AP*



Atalanta is back in Champions League after a victory over Lecce **PHOTO: X / @ATALANTA_BC**